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CHRISTIANITY AND LABOUR

COPY.

CHRISTIANITY AND LABOUR

BY THE REV.

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HODDER AND STOUGHTON

LONDON MCMX

PRESENTATION
COPY

TO THE CONGREGATIONS AT MUTHILL; ST. ENOCH'S, GLASGOW; BLAIRGOWRIE; ROTHESAY; AND SOUTH SHAWLANDS, GLASGOW; WHO HAVE HONOURED ME BY MAKING ME THEIR MINISTER, AND HAVE TAUGHT ME MORE THAN I HAVE TAUGHT THEM

PREFACE

THE entire social and economic situation which is summed up, sometimes so lightly, as the labour problem is so difficult and critical, that it is the duty of every Christian patriot to do what he can to discover and apply the right solution. It has been said that to ask a question aright is half the answer, and to understand this problem aright would be far more than half the solution. The attempts which have been made to solve it have, however, only too seldom been preceded as they should have been by earnest endeavour to find out exactly what it is. Even where there have been sympathy and freedom from prejudice there has frequently been essential ignorance.

The labour problem lies at the very heart of the still wider problem of Collectivism or Socialism, which has grown to such dimensions in recent years; and believing, as I do, that it is not only more complicated than ever, but that it has in it all the elements of revolution and even of disaster, unless Christ is made our guide, I venture to make my contribution to its solution; not as a partisan or an expert, but as a peacemaker and a Christian student of history. No loyal Christian can doubt that Christ can solve what is otherwise insoluble, and yet the danger is far from imaginary, that unless His people are quick to discover His will

and do it, some solution must, ere long, be attempted under an alien lord, even in this Christian land.

More than many ministers of religion, I have been in close contact with vital and important aspects of this labour problem all my days. My father was a Trade Unionist, and as Chairman of the Executive of his Union carried through what was a successful strike as strikes go. It was my fortune, too, before going to college, to work for several years in a weaving factory, where I was brought face to face with the problem, especially as it affects women and girls. As a student in the University of Glasgow circumstances led me, later on, to attend Professor Edward Caird's Political Economy Class, and it was no dry-as-dust system which he propounded, nor was his science dismal. Since then, as a minister, I have had very varied opportunities for studying the problem at first hand and in its most concrete forms.

My first charge was in a village where the relations between the great majority of the people and the one landlord, whose tenants or workmen most of them were, were almost feudal. If, however, it was in some respects a despotism, it was benevolent on the whole, and everybody was comfortably clad and had enough to eat.

My next charge was in a city among skilled artisans who were well off so long as trade on the Clyde was good, and they were young and strong enough to play their part. I found them more deeply interested in social subjects than in theology; but while not a few of them had drifted out of the Church or had never been in it, there

was no doctrinaire antagonism to speak of. Even Mr. Blatchford was not antagonistic then.* The Socialist propaganda was still very much in the air, and the men I met never seemed to regard me as an ally of the capitalists. One thing which I learned from them has remained with me, that the older workmen, with their greater responsibilities, keenly resented the part often played in their trade disputes by those who were young and irresponsible, and who thought it plucky to be always on the warpath.

After that, I was minister in a country town where I came into contact, not only with mill-workers and farm-servants, but with thousands of the flotsam and jetsam of our civilisation who came annually for the fruit harvest. Many of them were either unfit or unwilling to do regular work; and they represented one of the saddest of all the classes in our complex social organism, if they can be said to be in the organism at all. Since then I have been in a popular watering place, where there used to be boat-building and cotton mills, but which now depends on tourists and summer visitors; now I am back in the city again.

I do not mention these things by way of claiming expert knowledge of the labour problem in all its bearings, but rather as an excuse for venturing to deal with a theme so beset with difficulties. It sometimes happens that those

* *Cf.* his tribute to Christianity, as quoted in the *Methodist Times*, February 15, 1906: "Almost every noble action and sweet personality of these centuries has come of it. A very great deal of our progress has come of it. All the mercy and patience we have in the present, and all the hope we have in the future, have come of it."

who belong to the labouring classes deprive investigators, who never had their opportunities for getting knowledge at first hand, of the help they might easily render them. That so many forget the hole in the rock from which they were digged is only one of the many proofs of the desolating ravages of the caste spirit even in the Church of Jesus Christ, who was a working man. Nowhere do academic doctrines require the corrective of actual acquaintance with the flesh-and-blood conditions of the situation more than in connection with labour.

No inquirers into the life of the labourer, no matter how sympathetic and well-informed they may be, can ever know what it is as those can who have actually lived it. Unless they are to the manner born they are almost certain to lack the true sense of proportion, or to fail in their perspective. Yet in all my experience of Church historians or Church courts I have hardly ever met any one, either cleric or lay, who wrote or spoke as having been a labourer himself. In all the ages it has been the unique glory of the Church that the highest places were within reach of the working man's son if he had the Divine right to rule.

But those who have thus risen to place and power have often forgotten their brethren whom they left behind in the prison-house. They have even talked of never having been so happy as when they were there themselves, although they seldom proposed to go back again. One result of this has been that ignorance often prevails where knowledge is the first requisite, and that the most ridiculous statements are freely made and

accepted as true. Another result, which is perhaps more grievous still, is that those who need counsel and guidance are often hopelessly alienated. They find those who should have been their spokesmen and interpreters either silent altogether or more capitalist than the capitalists. What is needed everywhere is that the whole truth should be sympathetically known.

Not long ago a warm-hearted, open-handed minister, with a deservedly great reputation as a worker among the poor, laid it down as an axiom that no working man's family can live decently on less than two pounds a week. With all my heart do I wish that every family in the land had that, and more. They could easily spend it to their moral and physical advantage. But to say that no family can live decently on less than two pounds a week is to bring a kind of railing accusation against a multitude of homes where lives not only decent, but comely and gracious, are being lived on far less than that sum.

I have known such a home where a true Christian life gathered round an income which was seldom more than one pound a week. That meant, of course, that there was self-surrender as well as both gifts and graces, which cannot always be counted on and can never be demanded; but the thing which it is said cannot be done was done, and done well. There was no waste and there was no drinking. But neither was there anything sordid or mean. There never was a time when there was no money in the bank, or when any member of the household was kept back from church for want of clothes.

Important and altogether necessary as the

income is, it is only one element after all. The ethical aspects of the labour problem are even more important than the economic.

At the other extreme of ill-informed statement on this subject are the anecdotes about self-made men which are sometimes retailed at Merchant Company banquets and General Assembly conferences, sometimes by the self-made men themselves. They tell of what was achieved in the good old times on seven or ten shillings a week. Usually, however, their tales are not received as genuine records, especially when they are told by way of criticising those who refuse to be content with a mere pittance as their share of the joint profits of labour and capital.

Whatever may have been possible fifty years ago, it is not possible now to bring up a family on ten or twelve shillings a week; and if ever it was possible it was done at a great cost. The entire conception of life and the whole mode of living have so changed, and changed for the better, since then that what might have been done long ago without injury to self-respect or hurt to the moral self, could only be done now in squalor and degradation—at any rate, in a town, and in all this discussion it is an important factor that we are now so largely a nation of dwellers in towns. However wise or good they may be, lessons on thrift cannot but be ineffective so long as they are given to mill-girls by those who spend as much on holidays as their hearers earn; or to working men by those who spend as much on golf as their hearers have for all the necessaries of life.

Yet another example of the influence of

ignorance and *ex parte* statement is the indignation which so often gathers round what is stigmatised as the sin of cheapness. A maximum of eloquence has been expended on this theme with a minimum of warrant. The woes of the poor sempstress or machinist have been ascribed to greedy bargain-hunters, when the real cause of the evils, only too real and too deplorable, is usually to be sought for elsewhere.

The truly disastrous and fatal competition is not that of the manufacturers or retailers seeking customers, but that of the crowds of unorganised women-workers who are ready to take work at any price. A competent authority has shown in connection with an article of feminine attire, for the finishing of which the starvation wage of half a crown per dozen was paid, that even if half a crown each had been paid there would have been a splendid profit for everybody concerned. The retailers have often their best profits on the cheapest goods. Long ago it was shown, before Lord Dunraven's Commission on Sweating, that a dog-chain which was retailed for fifteen-pence cost twopence for material and three-farthings for labour. The sin here could not be justly described as that of cheapness, at any rate.*

* The Trade Boards Act, which came into operation at the beginning of 1910, and which introduced a new and important principle into British legislation, is full of promise that some of the worst evils of sweating will be successfully dealt with at last. Within three months of its advent it has achieved a conspicuous success at Cradley Heath, so long notorious for the miserable wages, inhumanly long hours, and other degrading conditions of its

But this sort of inaccurate criticism reaches its climax and becomes most offensive when it is roundly asserted that no labourer can live a moral life in a two-roomed house. I am no advocate of small houses, and would rejoice in a minimum of four apartments. Only those can appreciate the advantages of having plenty of room who have known what over-crowding really means. Not a few might save on doctor's bills what would enable them to pay for a bigger house.

But those who discuss this aspect of a delicate theme should do so with some knowledge of the facts. Every case must be taken on its merits. A young couple may be very happy and very comfortable for a while in a house of two apartments, and many an aged couple are very happy and comfortable in such a home. Such reflections as this on some of the purest homes in the land, like kindred reflections on the morality of mill-girls and others similarly situated, ought never to be made without adequate acquaintance with the facts, and such an acquaintance would usually prevent them being made at all.

These may be extreme instances of ill-informed statements, but they are true instances and nowise isolated, and the fact remains that nothing but harm can result from the incursions of the ignorant, no matter how much sympathy there may be. There was once an arbiter who said that the case he had in hand had been very simple until he heard the other side. Yet an

women-workers. The wages of the chainmakers there have been almost doubled by the operation of the Act, and where the women have hitherto been working for 5s. or 6s. a week, the minimum for full time is now to be 11s. 3d.

arbiter must hear both sides, no matter how disconcerting the fuller knowledge may prove; and even the time-honoured cry about the good old times must be subjected to a vigorous criticism and only accepted with many a reservation.

That is true even of the much-belauded fifteenth century, that halcyon era of rude abundance, the golden age of the labourer in Britain, when there were no unemployed, and when there were neither paupers nor millionaires. The true golden age is happily still to come. Our best is yet to be. These olden times, with all their merits, were often very hard and very bad. The impression, for example, which is left on mind and heart after reading such a study as that of Mr. Gray Graham, on "Social Life in Scotland in the Eighteenth Century," is that the great mass of the honest, hard-working Scottish people in that era were ground down by the grimmest poverty. The only qualification which need be made is that poverty does not seem to have degraded the poor then as it does now, at least in the towns.

But it would be as short-sighted as it would be churlish to deny that both relatively and absolutely things have greatly improved since the days when the grandfather of David Livingstone could earn only threepence a day, and was sent to gaol for writing a petition on behalf of a poor old woman, representing that she could not live on her parish allowance of sixpence a month; or when, not a century ago, thousands of children in English mills and mines were wakened by the lash, and were kept awake by it from early morn till late at night."*

* See Gibbin's "English Social Reformers," pp. 112–123.

The best reason we have for expecting progress in the future is that there has been so much progress in the past. It is only out of movements which are permeated with hope that good can come. Low-browed, sullen despair has always been barren. Fruitful revolutions have always come when things had begun to mend, and not when they were at their worst.

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THE PROBLEM

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

IT has been said that the labour problem began with the primal curse, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." In reality it began with the determination of those on whom the curse fell to evade it if they could by making others work for them; a determination soon arrived at and long persisted in. In the good providence of God the curse itself might have become a blessing, but as the blight has worked out it has been a curse indeed for the great mass of men. It has brought such gigantic evils in its train as the degradation of woman to be a drudge, and the corroding system of slavery, that nemesis of the nations. In every generation it has embittered the social relationships and put enormous barriers in the pathway of human progress. Fortunately, however, we do not require meanwhile to go so far back as the Fall except in so far as that is necessary to remind us that the labour problem is intimately bound up with the still sadder and more perplexing problem of moral evil. To see this aright is to understand why it is that the wisdom and grace of Christ are alone sufficient for the needs and yearnings of our age; and our purpose now is to set forth what Chris-

tianity has already accomplished in the hope that the record will not only warrant us in claiming that the gospel rightly understood and applied is able to solve our labour problem, but that it will also show us how the solution must come. All the social problems are, of course, bound up with each other, and in part the solution of the labour problem may be looked for through the solution of other related problems such as intemperance, physical deterioration, and overcrowding into large centres of population. On the other hand, some of these related problems would probably disappear if the central problem of labour were rightly solved, and it is certain that this can never be done until it is realised that it is not an economic question merely but moral and spiritual.

All good patriots and Christians are agreed that some solution of the labour problem and the other social problems which cluster round it must be found, and that the King's business requires haste. Indeed, the urgency of the situation is such that some solution of it will ere long be found—if not the Christian solution, then some other; and found by force, if not in wiser ways—if not by evolution, then by revolution. The conviction of every loyal believer must be that a worthy and enduring solution can only be looked for through the honest application of the teaching of Christ, in the spirit of Christ. Even the possibility of a solution being attempted in a Christian land, under the auspices of those who teach that the first thing is to get rid of Christianity, and that "one of the great social needs of our time is to sweep away the whole tottering structure of conventional religion and worship," should fill every Christian heart

with shame.* Yet unless the Christian solution is found, and that quickly, it seems inevitable that some other will be tried; and it is for those who believe that it would be a dire calamity, as well as an everlasting disgrace, for our nation to go forward under any other banner but Christ's, to let His message be known in all its fulness everywhere, and to see that His spirit is loyally manifested in all the relationships of life.

It is true that this must be done with much humility and with a profound sense of the sorrowful fact that the weaknesses and defects of conventional Christianity are very manifold. A recent writer† of wide experience as minister, author, and evangelist, goes so far as to maintain that as things are Christ's work cannot be done in and through the Church which bears His name; and if that be so the sooner the Church is cleansed and reformed the better. Yet the work must also be done hopefully and strenuously and in no half-

* For examples of the materialistic attitude of some social reformers to Christianity, reference may be made to footnote on page 13 of Peabody's "Jesus Christ and the Social Question," 1907 edition: "A collection of such coarser utterances may be found in Kaufmann, 'Christian Socialism,' 1888, chap. ix.; and in profusion in Köhler, 'Sozialistische Irrlehren von der Entstehung des Christentums,' 1899, s. 21ff. 'To suppress religion which provides an illusory happiness is to establish the claims of real happiness' ('Nouveau Parti,' 1884; Kaufmann, p. 195). 'The cross, once a symbol of suffering, is now a symbol of slavery' (*To-day*, January, 1894; Kaufmann, p. 3). 'We are all, I take it, disciples of the materialist philosophy of history derived from Marx' (Remarks at Stuttgart Congress; Köhler, s. 7)."

† Rev. Dr. W. J. Dawson.

hearted or apologetic spirit. Many who ought to know better speak as if the Gospel of God's grace were a spent force, and only too many Christians are so sicklied o'er with care and responsibility that they have no heart to repudiate the baseless and shameful insinuation. It has been through His Church, in the right sense of that term, that Christ has worked hitherto, and with all its perversions and defects there is much in the history of the Church to support the claim that if Christianity were only allowed to do its work in its own way it would solve the labour problem of our time as it has solved many another labour problem in the years which are gone.* Even yet the estrangement between the Church and large sections of the community would disappear before the sunshine of brotherly kindness and Christian sympathy; before the love of justice and fair-play; and no believer should ever for one moment abandon the claim that Christ can solve every problem and right every wrong through the gospel of His grace

* "The great characteristic of Christianity, and the proof of its divinity, is that it has been the main source of the moral development of Europe" (Lecky).

"In all the greatest forward movements of humanity, religion has been one of the driving forces" (Rauschenbusch, "Christianity and the Social Crisis," p. 332).

"The Christian Church did much to soften and then to abolish slavery and serfdom, into which the peoples, defeated in the struggle for existence, had been forced" (Kirkup, "A History of Socialism," p. 268).

"Dare we, if we had the infant human race in our arms, dare we turn ourselves to that care-worn personage, our modern civilisation sitting at her factory gate, and say to her 'Take this child and nurse it for me'?" "The true mother must care for her child" (I. Taylor).

proclaimed in pure and generous Christian lives. It has been the mission of the gospel in every age to set those free who all their lifetime had been subject to bondage; and in so far as the labour problem is a part of the still more universal problem of sin, its solution can only come through Him who came to save sinners and to destroy the works of the devil. Already He has liberated the slave, and made the serf a free labourer and a ruling citizen; and this emancipation which has been accomplished through His spirit is but the first-fruits of that still greater emancipation which is yet to be achieved when man has been restored to perfect fellowship with God. Much as has been written about the dignity of labour and the horny hand and about the perennial sacredness of faithful toil, the fact remains that there was no dignity of labour until Christ came and that there is none yet where His healing touch is not felt. Wherever pagan ideals hold sway, either within the Church or without, the dignity of idleness holds the field. Nor can there be any Christian solution of the problem unless there is honest dealing with the facts of the case. Our Lord has done great things for the toiler already, but what He has done is only an earnest of what He and He alone will yet do when all men everywhere give heed to His teaching and do His will. As the industrial conflict thickens and becomes international in the fullest sense, the labour problem will become more complicated as well as more accentuated than ever; and Christianity alone can bind the nations with other ties than those of mutual suspicion and universal greed. Great things were hoped for from the spread of trade, but the nations are now

ready to fight for new markets and are strangling themselves with armaments. The gospel of God's grace alone can put labour in its rightful place, so that a man's work will no longer be merely the means whereby he earns his livelihood or tries to do so, but his divine vocation, his calling in deed and in truth, the means by which he has been called to glorify God and bless his fellow-men.

The labour problem is always with us. In some respects it is more with us than ever; and while it would be both stupid and ungrateful to deny that much progress has been made, it is impossible not to see how much more remains to be done. As Ferdinand Lasalle put it, "Man has been released successively from a state of legal dependence and from one of intellectual dependence; he must now be released from one of economic dependence." * It is not even certain that complete deliverance will come along the lines on which we have hitherto been moving. Salvation will probably not come by way of Westminster; probably not even through some extension or combination of Trade Unions new and old. The cry of the needy and wronged has now become articulate after a new fashion because of the extension of the franchise and the rise of the Labour Party, as well as through better organisation and the employment of the Press. Carlyle held that the woes suffered by the aristocrats during the French Revolution were as nothing compared with what

* "The political enfranchisement of the masses is well-nigh accomplished; the process which will occupy the next period will be that of their social enfranchisement" (B. Kidd).

the common people had suffered during long centuries of misery and misrule, but that those who were wronged in the Reign of Terror could shriek out and let their agonies be known. So now the millions who have perforce been silent so long are able to speak out. In these days of syndicates, however, the Press tends to be at the service of the biggest purse; the classes are still mightier than the masses; and labour is not yet as vocal as it will probably be soon. Besides all this the spread of a higher standard of comfort and a growing appreciation of the benefits of holidays and recreation, as well as a tenderer national temper and conscience, have led to an ever-deepening desire on the part of the majority to give heed to the appeal of the suffering and wronged, and to find some permanent remedy for our social ills. The great political parties admit the evils and only differ as to how they might be removed.

The labour problem changes its form somewhat with the fluctuations of trade, but while it becomes more acute, not to say menacing, when trade is bad and unemployment is widespread, it never wholly disappears even when there should be employment for all. There are phases of it, indeed, which only become acute when trade is good and in times of comparative prosperity. There is the problem of the employed as well as of those who are out of work. The issue is vastly more than a conflict between federated Trade Unions and federated employers. Not only are there many workers who are not in the Unions, there are multitudes of unskilled labourers who are always on the verge of destitution even when

work is plentiful. Everybody knows now of the thirteen millions of our population who are always within sight of starvation. To say that they are thriftless or shiftless, or that they ought to have been taught trades when they were young, only adds to the complications of the problem. Many of them may be sinners indeed, but they are not sinners above others, and they have been grievously sinned against. No amount of thrift would enable some of them to live on what they can earn, to say nothing of laying something past; and in any case whatever Political Economy may do and perhaps must do, Christianity cannot abandon them as thriftless, or leave them out of account. Whatever an agnostic science may do, the followers of Christ can never adopt the cry of those who denounce the mistaken kindness which spares such lives as those of the incurable at a great cost.

Then, further, there is the appalling complication which grows out of the fact that in many trades it is often impossible for those who are no longer young to obtain regular employment. An ordinary workman who requires to use spectacles or whose hair is growing grey soon finds himself out in the cold. He may not actually be dismissed on that account, but if once he is out of work he will not easily obtain regular employment again. The blame for this unhappy state of affairs is put by some on the insistence by the Trade Unions on a standard wage and on the operation of the Workmen's Compensation Acts. It is also due to the callousness of the great limited liability companies, and to the petty tyranny of those who find themselves dressed in a little brief authority. To

minimise the risk of loss to themselves, some of those who insure employers against accident risks are said to stipulate in certain trades that no workmen over fifty shall be engaged, and that no workman who has already been injured shall be re-engaged, or at any rate re-insured. It is supposed, apparently with little reason as statistics obtained by Sir John Brunner and Sir George Livesey have clearly shown, that such men are more liable to accident than younger and stronger men. And all this has added an element of peculiar pathos to the problem. It is nothing short of a tragedy when a man of fifty, still young at heart and in many ways as fit as ever he was, finds that he can no longer expect to get work at his own trade but must join the mournful ranks of the casual and unskilled labourers. The truth is that no outsider can realise just what it means. Old Age Pensions will require to begin at fifty or even earlier if they are to meet the exigencies of this new situation; and the sympathy of kindly Christian hearts cannot but go out to those who are thus relegated to the company of the worn-out long before old age or feebleness has come. As for the problem of the unemployed, recruited as they are in so many ways, and especially by the enormous development of labour-saving machinery, it is rapidly becoming a grim social spectre even in the summer months. It is the nightmare of those who bear rule in the land, and especially in the cities and large towns. During the last three months of 1908 the number of unemployed registered by Distress Committees in the United Kingdom was respectively 95,059, 123,162, and 134,445, which reveals a problem of

vast magnitude. The number of those who have registered their names at the Labour Exchanges, now happily and hopefully in operation, tells the same sad tale. Every winter calls on local and imperial authorities alike to face a huge mass of destitution which is all the more appalling that it persists in the midst of enormous wealth and sybarite self-indulgence; and as yet nothing in the shape of a thoroughgoing remedy has been even suggested. The "right to work" is no more than an empty formula as yet; while the Distress Committees set up under Mr. Walter Long's Unemployed Workmen Act of 1905 have only served to reveal how vast and how difficult the problem is. Hitherto, apart from the Labour Exchanges which have just been begun, any sort of stop-gap has been deemed sufficient; and all that has been hoped for has been that the distress would not become too obtrusive, and that there would be no disturbance of the peace. There has been a maximum of waste, and nothing of a permanent character has been achieved. Nor is this in any real sense a matter merely of Free Trade or Tariff Reform. The problem of the unemployed is often as acute in protected Germany and America as in free-trade Britain.

The labour problem is thus beset with difficulties and bristles with complications both moral and economic. It is tremendously concrete, too, although it has so often been dealt with in abstract and fantastic ways. The strongest passions are easily aroused in connection with it, and in the conflict between idealism and elemental needs and ruthless greed the ideal is only too seldom victorious. On the labourer's side the problem is

even more than one of his daily bread, it is one of life and death. On the side of the capitalist the most determined opposition to any radical change is inspired not only by all sorts of vested interests, but by the most inveterate use and wont. The subordination of the many to the few seems to the dominant few to have all the force of a natural law, and to be in harmony with the eternal fitness of things. Not only so, but the labour problem is closely bound up with many other difficult problems such as those connected with education, intemperance, and the land. So much is this the case that any easy solution of it must be viewed with suspicion. This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting. No man can become a saint in his sleep, nor can any nation obtain its freedom without agonising for it, or retain it without unceasing vigilance and sacrifice. Yet nations are born in a day; and after long, weary years of preparation social movements which at heart are really moral and spiritual, often ripen so fast that more may be done in a few glorious, fruitful years than had been done in centuries before. It is as when springtime comes with its new beauty and new life, and the long winter is forgotten in a few days of wondrous growth. So much is this the case, indeed, that shortsighted and prejudiced onlookers often see nothing but the rapid ripening and the harvest, and ignore or even deny the weary years of self-denial and toil of which these are the wondrous fruits.

Hence it is that the influence of the gospel in connection with the upward movement of the labourer has sometimes been overlooked; and that in the present era of stress and strain so few are turning

with expectant eyes to Christ. Only too many who ought to be proclaiming His lordship are silent, and some are hostile after a fashion which nothing but sheer ignorance can explain. The method of the gospel has always been to begin far down in the silent depths where the roots are to be found. It sets itself to raise the whole level of life and thought, and sometimes its noblest social achievements have been incidental rather than direct. Society can no more be regenerated by the various social problems being dealt with apart from each other than a man can be understood if he be thought of as if he were built in water-tight compartments like a modern ship. The whole being of man, the entire structure of the social order, must be dealt with if any of our outstanding problems are to be permanently solved, and if our repentance is not to be repented of; and that is why the gospel alone can provide the true and final solution. It alone can go down to the depths and deal with the causes of the evils we deplore. It alone can achieve the impossible, since it alone can give new life to the dead. It alone creates new ideals, implants new longings, fills the soul with an abhorrence of evil surroundings, and provides the new motive power. The wail of every other system has been "We know the right and wish the right and yet the wrong pursue." The gospel alone brings life, and life alone can suffice for the work which must be done; and any Christian who abates that claim is disloyal to his faith and his Lord. After legislation has spoken its last word—and it is still far from having done that—the still small voice of Divine truth has much to say. Even where the influence

of the gospel does not appear in the record of what has been already accomplished for the labourer it was nevertheless it that made progress and reform possible. The record is often defective; spiritual forces are notoriously elusive; and the kingdom of God does not come with observation of men. History is often written by those who are prejudiced and blind, and there are inquirers who never look beneath the surface for the spiritual influences which are the mightiest of the mighty. Not once only, but many a time, the all-important fact has been missed that it was the gospel which had created the atmosphere in which the new spirit of reform was able to live; and which above all else gave the energy which swept every obstacle aside. That it has often influenced those who were ignorant of its claims and even hostile to its Lord has made it all the more difficult for those who had not the love-light in their eyes to say, "Lo, Christ is there."

What exactly is meant by Christianity in the phrase Christianity and Labour will become clear as the discussion proceeds; but meanwhile it may be frankly admitted that when difficulties arise owing to the unworthiness of the human exponents of the Divine truth, shelter will not be sought for behind the distinction which some so persistently make between what is called the Christianity of the Churches and the Christianity of Christ. It is true that many blunders have been made, and that the true progress of the gospel is not to be sought for in any external organisations, but in the spiritual movements which persist in spite of all the egotism and ambition through which the mystery of iniquity

has manifested itself, not in one Church only, but in many, if not all. It is also true that we must judge righteous judgment, remembering that the kingdom of heaven is not of this world, and that God estimates things after an inward and spiritual fashion. Yet we must take Christianity, as we would take any other system, as it has manifested itself in history; and far too many apologists seem to think that any inconsistency, no matter how glaring, may be ignored or condoned by insisting on this distinction, sometimes so painfully obvious, between Christ's Christianity and that of the Churches. It might fairly enough be said of republicanism that it is different from the republic which grew out of the great French Revolution which was remaking Europe when the nineteenth century began. But while that is so, and ought to be borne in mind in any attempt to estimate the merits of republicanism, it would be quite otherwise were the claim advanced that republicanism is different from any, or all, of the republics which have ever existed, and must be judged apart from them. It would be pointed out, inevitably and justly, that we have no means of knowing what republicanism is in actual experience except through republics; and that, doctrinaire writers apart, it must stand or fall by its fruits as seen in the various attempts which have been made to embody its principles and aspirations. Theories which have never been embodied are open to the objection that they cannot be made concrete; and we have no right to expect a different principle to be adopted when we are trying to estimate what Christianity is, or what it has done or may yet do. For all

practical purposes as a factor in the solution of the labour problem, or any other problem, it must be taken very much as we find it among those who are Christians, or at any rate are all we have for Christians. It may fairly enough be argued that none of the various Churches fully represents the mind and purpose of Christ, but to say that all through the centuries the gospel has never made its power so truly felt as to be actually embodied in the life of any Christian community is to suggest that it is impracticable and impossible. Such a claim has no apologetic value and can only strengthen the attack. If Christianity has never yet been seen in its truth and beauty after all these ages, we can have no guarantee that it will ever be seen after such a fashion. For better or worse even those who know well that the Christianity of Christ is grander and fuller than the Christianity of all the Churches put together, must admit that we cannot but estimate its value for the work of reform by what it has actually done for and through those who have come under its influence. It may be true that in opposition to the mind and example of Him whose name they bear the Churches have only too often been the allies of the capitalists and the champions of the comfortable middle classes; and that their ministers, whether pastors or presbyters or priests, have only too often been content to be the chaplains of the *bourgeoisie*; although that is far from being the whole truth. But it remains true and undeniable that the moral value of any system or faith and its power to mould and redeem society must be gathered from its influence on those who hold its tenets and profess to be its

exponents and disciples. After Christianity has had nineteen centuries in which to show what it is and what it can do it is not open to its friends to urge that it ought not to be judged by what we now find existing under the name. For the practical work of life it is no more possible to estimate the worth of the gospel apart from Christians as we find them in history and the ordinary daily life, than it would be to estimate the worth of Stoicism apart from the Stoics. Nor would it be Christian to attempt to evade the issue in such a fashion. How quickly such a claim would be brushed aside alike by the champions of the Christianity of the Churches and of the Christianity of Christ were it made on behalf of Confucianism or Mohammedanism! They would at once insist that we can only judge of the value of the classics of Confucius by seeing what they have made of the Chinese and what the Chinese have made of them; and that Mohammedanism, as we have it in Turkey or Persia, with its sensuality and slavery and corruption, must be taken as the practical and most significant exposition of the Koran. No Christian is all the gospel would have him be, and in the gospel itself there are still vast territories to be explored, profound revelations for those who do the will of God; but it is only through those whose lives it moulds and whose thoughts and deeds it inspires and directs that Christianity can influence the social life of the nations, solve the labour problem or any other, and make its true meaning and nature manifest. "What East London requires is Christianity," said one on whose spirit the burden of the sheep without a shepherd lay heavily. "No," replied his

friend, "what East London requires is Christians," and he was right. The gospel must become concrete in human lives before it can inspire men and lift them up; and it is through those in whom it thus becomes concrete that its value and power become known.

In every age there have been revolts against the Christianity of the Churches, and strenuous appeals made for a return to the simplicity of the truth as Christ proclaimed and lived it; and our own generation has been no exception to the rule. It has heard the cry "Back to Christ" as loudly as any, and from as many quarters. Yet it can hardly be affirmed that these various revolts and appeals throughout the centuries have made any material difference either in the form or the substance of the Christian message, or that they have added appreciably to its effectiveness on behalf of the toiling millions. After all, it is to the main stream of the Church—even although there have been times when every one of its attributes as One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic were in practice denied—as it has flowed down through the ages, and done its healing, fertilising work as the river of God, that we must look for the historical and authorised exposition of the gospel, and not to eddies here and there or to any sporadic outbreaks. For better or for worse, and with every passionate yearning to make it worthier its Lord and more in harmony with its credentials, we must take historical Christianity very much as we find it, and refuse to shelter ourselves from criticism by references to the Christianity of Christ. Even Christ Himself must stand or fall by what He

makes of those who come under His influence; and if we are to be able to claim honestly that Christianity has been the labourer's best friend, and that the gospel has already done so much for labour that we are warranted in looking to it to guide us all the way through the jungle, we must be able to show that it has manifested this friendship and done this healing work along the lines of its ordinary development down through the ages. And that is just what we hope to be able to demonstrate, making only one proviso, that it is to the Church in its entirety and at its best we must look in estimating what its attitude to labour has been.

All this being so, any honest inquiry into the history of the relations of Christianity and labour is not only beset with many difficulties, inasmuch as it brings us into touch with strong passions and inveterate prejudices as well as with deeply intrenched vested interests, it is also intensely practical. It stands or falls by what has actually been done and what may fairly be looked for in the days to come. And, in spite of all the difficulties and hindrances, there are many encouragements to go forward with high expectations and in no merely apologetic spirit or antiquarian interest. It is only by seeing what has been accomplished in the past that we can discover what may be hoped for in the days to come, and also how the best results may be attained. Everywhere the cry "Who will show us any good?" may be heard by those whose ears are open, and nothing but culpable ignorance of what has been already done can warrant the belief which some seem to cherish, that the nations may advance to their

golden age under another leadership than that of Christ. But even Christians are not proclaiming as they should that, if only the government were on His shoulders and they were genuinely loyal to Him, He would solve every problem, right every wrong, and usher in the Millennium. Many of them do not even seem to be sure that He has anything to say about the present distress, or about such things as the labour problem. Some of them actually think of the State, which is God's ordinance and ought to be as holy as the Church, as the present evil world which they have been called to hate, under another name.

There are several reasons why an inquiry into the history of what the gospel has done for the labourer, as it has led him up from slavery to citizenship, with the promise of more to follow, is both timely and urgent at the present juncture. For one thing, the older *laissez-faire* doctrines, which were held in such reverence as almost sacrosanct, and which have hitherto dominated all action concerning labour so remorselessly, are now so hopelessly discredited that no one seems so poor as to do them reverence.* If they are not quite

* "All is changed since the time when Carlyle and Ruskin lifted up their voices in the wilderness to an unbelieving generation" (Kirkup, "A History of Socialism," p. 271). "The simple creed of individualism, full of virtue as it was for many a century, will no longer work, for we know that there is more in freedom than emancipation. The creed that would not merely supplant it, but sublate it, taking up its truth in correcting its errors, is hardly formulated; and in consequence there is much confusion" (Professor Jones, "The Working Faith of the Social Reformer," Preface, p. ix).

banished to Saturn they are no longer looked upon as a kind of economic appendix to the Decalogue, to be obeyed by those who treated the Ten Commandments with scanty respect. Even those who deplore the fact and view it as of evil omen admit that an enormous change has taken place during the last thirty or forty years. It is no longer held by any reputable authority, either in the Church or the State, that the gospel of buying in the cheapest market and selling in the dearest will bring social salvation or suffice for every emergency. No one is now fatuous enough to believe that, valuable and far-reaching as the laws of supply and demand are, they can be expected to regulate all human relationships. Even the selfishly obtuse have been forced to see that it is not the whole truth to teach that if men and women are only left to themselves they will find their proper level as water does. Even the keenest doctrinaires are coming to see that in a complicated social organism like ours men and women can only find their level and do their best work if artificial barriers are thrown down; and that if we are to rely on natural laws to solve our problems we must supply the conditions under which alone they can operate freely and successfully. The best thought of our time, under the guidance and inspiration of Christian truth, shudders at some of the results of the competitive struggle which drives so many weak ones to the wall or tramples them ruthlessly underfoot. Those who are obedient to the heavenly vision find it impossible to admit that the level which multitudes meanwhile reach can be their right level, or that their condition is other than

intolerable. Not even the sanction of profound philosophers and scientific experts can induce our generation to believe that the doctrine of the survival of the fittest, through the struggle for existence, is applicable in the same sense to animals and men; to a rabbit warren and a human home. Nor will any kind of argument convince them that it is mawkish sentimentality to do what they can to keep the maimed alive and save the stricken and unfit. Some of the wisest and best of mankind have come from the ranks of those whom the rigid scientific logic of materialism would have consigned to destruction. Even at its worst, the system now so largely discredited, and which survives only in virtue of its own momentum, was never fully carried out to its logical issues, thanks to kindly human hearts and Christlike yearnings. But in so far as it was carried out, it was injurious alike to those who rose to the top and to those who went under. It is the national safety and well-being as well as the national honour which are involved. The logic of the heart must be open-eyed as well as the logic of the brain. Political economy is no longer the dismal science; and many of its truest exponents find a place in it for the appeals of brotherhood and the spirit of Christ, as well as for the axioms of the market-place and the Stock Exchange. And if in the transition stage in which we are now involved mistakes are made and there is loss as well as gain, the truth is great and will prevail.

It is one of the outstanding ironies of modern history that the *laissez-faire* creed was born in orthodox surroundings, and called forth no protest

at the time from the Christian communities. The reason for that, however, is not that these communities, tinged although they were with rationalism and moderatism, were callous; but that they accepted the comfortable doctrine that if the "letting-alone" policy were only allowed to operate fully and freely everything would come right in the end. It was only after it had been weighed in the balance and found wanting that it was seen that it really amounted to the proclamation of universal selfishness as the working principle of life; and, whatever it may have been a century ago, it is pitiful now when Christians support the Darwinian struggle for existence and oppose altruism as socialistic and even atheistic.

The influence of the new and more Christian outlook on the social organism has already been great in our imperial politics, and cannot but be greater still as the new truth is better understood and is more fully applied. The older party cries no longer suffice. As the new leaven works they appeal less and less to the spiritual and free until now they are hardly so much as heard. The old lines of demarcation have no longer any significance, and no longer evoke any enthusiasm. The shrewd editor of a great Scottish newspaper * declared recently that the new interest in social questions had destroyed the interest which used to be taken in such a question as Disestablishment. There are now groups within each of the old historical parties, and ere long there may be groups instead of parties; at least for social questions. It passes the wit of men who are in earnest

* Dr. William Wallace, of the *Glasgow Herald*.

and are face to face with the actual problems of the daily life to discover why Whig and Tory—if there are Whigs and Tories now—cannot agree to deal with our social evils resolutely and unitedly at a time when the wolf is at the door and the supreme interests of the nation are at stake. The extension of the franchise is all very well, and the extension of local self-government may bring blessings in its train; but the right solution of the labour problem along healthy Christian lines would mean infinitely more for the nation than either. It concerns the homes of the Empire and its happiness and growth as no merely academic question ever can. So much is this the case that the whole party system must go if the solution cannot be reached otherwise, and the moral and spiritual bearings of the situation must be faced without the leave of the party Whips being either asked or given. One danger, indeed, of the situation as it now exists is that the very urgency and necessity of social reform may be exploited in unworthy ways so as to set class against class in the State. That way lies revolution, and not such reforms as have done most for the labourer in the past and which ought in the near future to perfect the work of regeneration which is to make ours a free and happy land. The nation eagerly waits some great constructive policy which will make it industrially and commercially prosperous by making it not only free, but sober and content. It could not be said as jauntily now as it was in Sir William Harcourt's time that we are all Socialists, for Socialism is far more of a definite reality now and the situation has become far more intense; but the nation as a whole will not quarrel

over a name, if there is the prospect of true amelioration, and if it be recognised that in addition to bailing the water out of the ship of the State we must stop the leaks through which it is pouring in. When politicians seek to discredit reforms on which the hearts of the people are set by describing them as Socialistic, they are simply promoting Socialism. Even among those who are not very acute the conclusion is inevitable that if such things as Old Age Pensions, State intervention in Labour disputes, Labour Exchanges, and the Trade Boards Act are Socialism, then Socialism is not a thing to be greatly dreaded.

But great as the effect of the revolution which has taken place so swiftly and surely in the economic outlook has been or can be in politics, it ought to be even greater in connection with Christian effort and the attitude of the Church to labour. To imagine that the Church has nothing to do with such matters is to be under the influence of a purely pagan conception of the universe and of the State. It is to include the social order which is Divine, or ought to be, among those evil things which the Christian must oppose to the death as of the earth, earthy. Yet in addition to the sectaries, of whom there are but few, who abjure politics because their kingdom is not of this world—although most of them are as eager as their neighbours to get their share of the world's goods—there are multitudes of earnest men and women who would be shocked at such an attitude in theory who nevertheless adopt it in practice. They never lift a hand to secure better government either in the community or the nation. They do nothing to secure either better

laws or the better administration of existing laws in the interest of the weak, or the tempted, or the children; and all the while they plume themselves on the superior piety which leads them to be such separatists. But they ought to be compelled somehow to consider how any worthy solution of the many-sided social problem can be looked for, or how the kingdom of God is to come all round, unless the whole influence of applied Christianity is directed to bring it about.* True religion, like Jacob's ladder, must rest firm and sure on the solid earth or it will never reach the skies;† and it is only in fellowship with Christ and by walking in His light that the right sense of proportion between the things which are seen and those which are unseen can be obtained and kept. Christ alone can lead the nations in such a way that there will be deliverance alike from worldliness and other-worldliness; from a heartless materialism and a fruitless idealism. Only with the help of those who know the truth can lofty ideals of duty and justice, of freedom and devotion be set free from bondage to the desire for pleasure, profit, and ease; as if Paradise meant "eight hours for sleep, eight hours for play, eight hours for work, and eight shillings a day." So long as the Church

* "The Church should create in all its members an eager desire to lessen the sorrow, the suffering, and the injustice as as well as the sin of the world" (Dr. Dale at International Congregational Council, 1891).

† "Most working men don't care a rap for the Church to-day, because they believe it is all up in the air, or has simply to do with the hereafter. But I believe they are naturally religious, though their religion does not always express itself in an orthodox manner" (Charles Stelzle).

of Christ is loyal to its Lord and Master it can never cease to proclaim that there can be no blessedness without goodness and God; but in order that her perennial proclamation of this may be effective she must take her place at the head of every genuine movement for breaking the rod of the oppressor and letting the oppressed go free. It was to save men in all the round circle of their being, and not merely to save their souls, that the Saviour came. The new political economy ought to be as distinctively Christian as the old was pagan, and no opportunity ought to be lost for claiming the new social aspirations of our generation and all its strivings for Him whose Spirit has given them birth.*

Another reason why such an inquiry into the historical relations of Christianity and labour is timely and urgent is that labour is now organised for the fray in such a fashion that, whether the politicians and ecclesiastics wish it or not, the labour problem must soon be dealt with in the most thoroughgoing fashion. Once again a crisis has come when the voice of Christ ought to be

* *Cf.* Professor Ingram in *Encyclopædia Britannica*, vol. 19, p. 401 : "What is now most urgent is not legislative interference on any large scale with the industrial relations, but the formation, in both the higher and lower regions of the industrial world, of profound convictions as to social duties and some more effective mode than at present exists of diffusing, maintaining, and applying those convictions." "The solution, indeed, must be at all times largely a moral one ; and it is the spiritual rather than the temporal power that is the natural agency for redressing or mitigating most of the evils associated with industrial life." "The neglect of these considerations appears to us the principal danger to which the contemporary German school of economists is exposed."

heard; and if only His Church would deliver His message in its fulness men would still listen to it, for His is the Divine right to rule which cannot be gainsaid and always ensures followers. Mere platitudes about labour and capital being simply two sides of one whole neither of which can stand without the other, can no longer suffice to avert the deluge. That is one of the half-truths which are often wholly false. The attempts of the caucuses and the party managers to guide the new forces into the old grooves are ridiculously and pathetically in vain. They pipe but the others will not dance. Now that the labourers have the vote they only require organisation and unity of purpose to be supreme in a State like ours which is governed by majorities; and these conditions are being supplied with unlooked-for and portentous rapidity. The genuine surprise of those who prophesy fair things and cry "peace, peace" where there is no peace, when their predictions are falsified, only serves to show how blind even the most acute may be to the signs of the times. It is not merely that the workman who was once a slave and then a serf, but is now an employee and a voter, can turn the scale in many constituencies; it is that those who have perforce been dumb heretofore have now found a voice, yea, many voices, and that they must be listened to. Every wound in the body politic —and there are many such—has now a tongue; and while it is true that those who are just coming to their own, so far as the franchise is concerned, have been frequently exploited by the demagogue and self-seeker for their own ends, there are many indications that that phase is drawing to a close.

A prominent Unionist politician declared not long since that the average for ability among the Labour members in the late Parliament was higher than among any of the other parties. And probably that is true also as regards earnestness and moral character. Nothing in connection with the modern labour movement has been more remarkable than the courage and independence of many of the labour leaders. In connection, for example, with the troubles in Northumberland and South Wales consequent on the coming of the Eight Hours Act into operation, they have played a very noble part. Far more truly than the representatives of any of the other political parties those of them who are in Parliament have refused to be mere delegates, and not a few of them have risked their all in their devotion to justice and duty. That they are primarily concerned in seeking to promote the interests of their own class is inevitable, and is just what all the other parties have done.

It is very strange to hear landowners and brewers who have consistently used every atom of their political influence to secure their own personal ends denounce the Labour members as only representing a class. Even from the sinister side of this accusation they are less culpable than the others, inasmuch as their class is more than any other synonymous with the nation. In these circumstances, so unique and momentous, and so charged with vast possibilities, if a study of the whole situation is specially urgent for any, it is supremely so for those who bear the name of Christ and believe in the coming of the kingdom which is righteousness and peace and joy in the

Holy Ghost. How pitiful it would be if in this Christian land the first leaders of triumphant democracy were those who, however much they may speak about the Carpenter of Nazareth, say frankly that they are not Christians! Lord Shaftesbury has left it on record how surprised and chagrined he was to find that in much of his philanthropic work and remedial strivings he was opposed by the bishops and helped by the freethinkers. Nor has this weird experience been in any way singular or unique. Yet there are many who profess to be astonished at the great and growing estrangement between organised Christianity and organised labour. As was inevitable, there have been faults on both sides, and there are still faults on both sides. Much, for example, that men like Mr. Blatchford have written about Christ and the Gospels has been as ill-informed as it was offensive, and has alienated not a few both among workmen and others who were with him heart and soul in his social crusade. No true friend of labour will claim that either its leaders or their followers in the great upheaval have always been either wise or just; and the movement is too great and has too much depending on it to be treated as if it were above criticism. But the chief responsibility for such errors must rest with those Christians who have for so long had power alike in the Church and the State and have failed to use it in either sphere, in harmony with the spirit of the Master whom they professed to follow. Those who claim to be superior and have had so many advantages ought to prove their claim by being wiser, more generous, and more responsive to every lofty appeal. But

instead of that they have usually fought to the bitter end for every privilege and have yielded only to compulsion, and in such a fashion as to get no benefit from their concessions when they did yield. As long as they could they were only too ready to act as if the subordination of the great mass of men to be hewers of wood and drawers of water for the privileged few were an ordinance of God and approved of by Him who in the days of His flesh had nowhere to lay His head. Most of them have only discovered the social bearings of the gospel, and that it has a message about labour, by a process which partakes largely of the nature of a death-bed repentance.

There may be differences of opinion as to the extent of the present estrangement between organised labour and organised Christianity, but as to the fact there can be no doubt. There are brilliant exceptions on both sides. There are labour leaders who are devoted Christian workers; men who got all their inspiration and training for their leadership in the service of the Church and have not forgotten the fact. They are what they are and are where they are because of what Christ has done for them, and because they have consecrated their gifts and graces to him. Mr. Arthur Henderson, when leader of the Labour Party in the House of Commons, argued that "the Churches and the Labour Party combined might make life more wholesome, pure, and lovely." There are also leaders in many of the Churches who are in intelligent sympathy with the modern movement and have done what they could to make it the vital force it now is. But meanwhile on both

sides such men are the exception rather than the rule. Not only so, but there are ominous signs that the alienation is not only growing but is assuming new forms. In the labour papers and elsewhere it frequently happens that what is shown is no longer mere indifference to religion and the Churches—the agnosticism of the proletariat—but in many cases doctrinaire unbelief. Great masses of the people not only absent themselves from public worship, as has always been the case, but are openly hostile to ministers of religion and active religious propaganda. Certain aspects of the Higher Criticism movement are being popularised in the crudest fashion, not only with disastrous results, but with deliberate animus. A little knowledge is always dangerous unless it is preliminary to further research; and when it is knowledge of what is still largely hypothetical and untested it is doubly dangerous. In many quarters the opposition is becoming doctrinal and theological as well as social and economical. Labour is setting itself to avenge its wrongs on the Church as the ally of the capitalist by becoming the ally of the materialist and infidel, and no good purpose can be served by either side ignoring the fact and what it involves.

This estrangement is all the more to be deplored that it is in Christianity alone that the reconciliation can be found of the two great social tendencies of the age—individualism and collectivism—so that each can find its true place and appropriate triumph as the complement of the other. In the gospel there is neither individualism nor collectivism, but Christ is all and in all; and it

is in Christianity alone that capital and labour can find common ground so that nothing need be lost. The social ideal set up in the teaching of Christ and His apostles can never be attained by the destruction or emasculation of any of the elemental forces which are at work, but only through each of them being brought into harmony with the others and spending itself for the common good; and this can only be done under the leadership of Christ and through those who are filled with His spirit and have His mind in them. From one viewpoint the gospel is essentially individualistic. It has put a new, even an infinite value on man as man. The sublime spectacle of the Good Shepherd who died for the sheep going out after the one sheep that was lost has made every soul stand out by itself as of supreme worth and as having infinite possibilities. It was this wondrous revelation which won step by step for the labourer the recognition of his rights as made at first in the image of God and as called to restoration, and more than restoration, through the Divine redemption. As one well entitled to speak has put it, "The improvement of the condition of all the unhappy classes of which we have been speaking—women, infants, slaves, gladiators—can be traced directly back to a single fundamental Christian truth. It was the belief in the importance of the individual human soul in the eyes of God that led the converted Roman to realise his responsibility and change his attitude towards the helpless beings whom he had despised before and neglected." From another viewpoint, however, the gospel is essentially collectivist and has

given a new place and meaning to the conception of the brotherhood of man. That conception is distinctively Christian, the co-relative of the conception of the fatherhood of God. It is to the Christian apostle to the Gentiles we owe the great word that no man can either live or die to himself, and those who imagine that it will hasten the coming of the social millennium to ignore Christ are strangely ignorant of the way in which progress has hitherto been attained. The saying of Aristotle that the solitary man must either be an animal or a god gets its fulness of application in the gospel. A solitary believer is a contradiction in terms. Those who do not love the brethren whom they have seen stand convicted of not being lovers of God whom they have not seen. Those who can be at ease and imagine that all is well because they themselves are clothed and fed, or because God has drawn near to them with His saving grace, when all around there are multitudes who are in despair and want and in the shackles of sin, have not truly learned Christ. The gospel has in it the secret of the social organism in which no one is thought of merely as a means nor any one thought of merely as an end, but in which every one is at once both means and end. It anticipated the social doctrine of which nineteenth-century philosophers were proudest as their own peculiar discovery, although they were not always loyal to it. It anticipated Hegel, Comte, and Spencer in its insistence on the solidarity of the race. There is nothing in our modern life which is noble and inspiring which is not the gift of Christ rightly understood. He came not to be ministered unto

but to minister, and it is just in proportion as men have breathed His spirit and the fulness of the meaning of His gospel has been unfolded by the evolution of the Christian centuries that there has been life from the dead for the toiling masses, or that power has come for the redemption of the slave, the liberation of the serf, the lifting up of the despairing, underpaid, and overdriven working man.

All through the discussion of this labour problem it must never be forgotten that the social question is almost entirely a question of motive power or force, and that Christianity alone has the necessary dynamic. It differs from every other system in this all-important respect, that it has redemptive power in it to set the captive free and to save the souls of men. Apart from Christ the wail of the shackled all through the ages has been, "the good that I would I do not, and the evil that I would not that I do." Apart from Him the lament of the reformer in all generations and every land has been "this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed." The gospel is infinitely more than a philosophy or a system of ethics. It is more than a plan of salvation or a theory of redemption. It is the engrafted word of God which can save the soul. It stands or falls by the power which it brings; the power to turn every command into a promise; the power to save to the uttermost and make the weakest strong and the worst the best. It is not one religion among many. It is a unique revelation. It is pre-eminent or it is nothing. Man was made for eternity as well as for time; for the spiritual as

well as for the temporal; and the gospel alone can fathom his needs and yearnings and minister fully to them. Some one has remarked that "the devotions of Empire have all something stagey about them unless they are suffused by the principles of the kingdom of God," and to this it may be added that the great outstanding claim of the kingdom—a claim which has been tested and verified again and again—is that it alone has the inherent energy which can secure reform. Its message is no mere hypostatised copy-book headline, but a living word of power. It does not concern itself with trite proverbs or mere reminders of duty, but with the creation of an actual relationship between regenerated men and women and the living God.

Were any further apology needed for trying along these lines to trace the influence of the gospel in the process by which the labourer has so far come to his own, it would be found in the manifest need there is for the light of Christian truth being thrown on both sides in the great strife. On the one hand, it is undeniable that even where the division of the profits of the common adventure is fairest, labour is not yet receiving it due reward or its rightful place in the partnership. The labourer has often to live in a mere hovel and face the direst want, while his employer lives in a castle and in sybarite self-indulgence; and to excuse such injustice to the toiling partner in the business by reflections on the way in which his earnings are misspent, or to allege that the labourer is often as happy as the capitalist, is altogether beside the mark. That which ought to be a perfect co-opera-

tion has come to be a sort of civil war; and this is just the war where victory is the next worst thing to defeat; and where the apparent victory of one side is often real defeat for both, and for the whole nation besides. Now if ever, if Christianity has a message it ought to be fearlessly proclaimed. If Christians have nothing to say as to the mind of Christ at this juncture, when nearly everything is in the melting-pot, they must be silent for evermore. On the other hand, in only too many cases, the labourer is coming lamentably short of the ideal he should have before him, and is robbing himself of that self-respect and that honest pride in his work which are so much more valuable than either shorter hours or higher wages. The dignity of idleness is only too often set over against the dignity of labour, and many are strenuous in their endeavours to live down to their standard. Not many years ago it was announced that a first-class battleship had been found to leak badly, and that examination of her double bottom had shown that rivet-holes had been filled with putty and red-lead instead of bolts. It was added that the riveting had been done by piecework. Between what has been called the "ca-canny" policy and the ideal of the gospel, that a man's work is his divine calling, his divine vocation, there is a great gulf fixed. One would fain hope that scamping and cheating are as rare as they are lamentable and abominable, but some who work in the great public works affirm that the case is far otherwise, and that not only there but in smaller works the extent to which dishonesty and petty pilfering prevail can be credited only by those who have seen it for themselves. It may be that some look on

these things as the guerilla department in the great civil war between capital and labour which never ceases; but everything is not fair in war any more than in love; and this kind of thing has nothing in common with the open stand-up fight of the lock-out or the strike, barbarous as these are. It belongs to the sphere of operation which all honest men despise—the sphere of poisoned springs and dum-dum bullets. It has its parallel only in the callousness with which workmen are sometimes treated by those in authority when trade is bad, and the miserable spirit which some unworthy representatives of capital seldom fail to display to their opponents when they have the opportunity. They sometimes make it impossible for certain workmen to get work anywhere, and end in driving them out of the land; but it is part of the seriousness of the situation that such questions as these are seldom looked on as part of the labour problem at all. Yet they are truly an integral part of it, and it is not possible to deal with the relations between Christianity and labour without dealing with them; nor can the gospel manifest its power unless they are dealt with. Duties and rights go together and imply each other alike for capitalists and labourers. Labour can never come to its own unless, along with righteous demands for a fuller share of the fruits of its co-operation with capital, it also wages incessant warfare against everything which prevents the workmen from looking the whole world in the face not only as efficient but as honest and true. Nor can capital claim the recognition of its undoubted rights unless on its part it recognises that the manhood and self-respect of the labourer must be honoured

all through, and unless everything is clean and straightforward, and all tyranny and class prejudice are strenuously opposed. Both sides must play the game, and have nothing to do with explosive bullets or slaying the wounded. There is nothing worth fighting for otherwise, nor anything worth winning. Neither side can invoke the help of the Power in the universe which makes for righteousness unless it is seeking to do the right, and is prepared to be loyal to whatever is just and true; and when the world-forces meet in their Armageddon no other power will be of any avail.

It is along these lines and in this spirit that I propose to consider the history of labour throughout the Christian centuries and among the Christian peoples. So far as the story can be summarised it tells how the labourer who was everywhere a slave to begin with gradually became a serf under the new forces which Christ set agoing among the nations; how with many ups and downs in the process, and many ebbs in the flowing tide, he gradually ceased in the same way to be a serf and become a free servant; and then how in modern times he has gradually attained his present position, so full of promise and potency, when he has become a voter and a citizen, and his industrial position can best be described by the naturalised word "employee," the man who calls no other man master. The periods during which these transitions took place may be taken as corresponding generally to those in Church history which are described as the Early Church, the Church of the Middle Ages, the Post-Reformation Church, and the Church of To-day. The movement to be traced might also

be described as a progress in three stages; first, slavery, in which the labourer was the property of the capitalist; secondly, feudalism, in which the capitalist and landlord had a lien on the labourer who was attached to the land; and thirdly, individualism, in which the labourer as servant and employee is free to come and go as he pleases, and in which competition is expected to secure the due distribution of wealth. A fourth stage might be added to describe our own time in which one check after another is being devised to limit unfettered or unfair competition, and mitigate some of its baneful results. What we are to endeavour to find out is whether there is an even deeper correspondence between these industrial epochs and the parallel eras in Church history than one of time; and how far the improvement in the labourer's position which these eras saw was due to growth in the fulness of the Christian revelation, a profounder perception of what the gospel meant, and a more thoroughgoing obedience to Christ as supreme. If it be found that directly and indirectly Christ has been Lord and Leader all through along the upward pathway we ought also to be able to predict in some degree how the forces of amelioration which have done so much already may be relied on to carry the good work to perfection, as well as how these forces can best be evoked and guided. As it was in the days of His flesh, Christ has not been able as yet to do as many mighty works as He yearned to do because of the unbelief of His own and of those whom He came to help and deliver. But as it also was then, so it has been all through the ages. He has been laying His blessed hands on a few sick

folks and healing them; and this healing has been the measure of the progress of the race. If only men's eyes were turned to Him and they saw as they ought that He alone can solve every problem and right every wrong, His mighty works so long deferred would ere long make all things new the wide world over.

In many respects the movement by which the slave has become the citizen and employee has been of the kind which is known as progress by antagonism. It is as far as possible from one which could be represented by a straight line. Moral movements can seldom be represented by such a simple diagram. It would be more accurate to portray it as a spiral ascent; and in our days it appears to be at the point where a new circle is being completed preliminary to further ascent. First of all it was a movement from *status* to *contract*—that is, from a condition of affairs where the labourer had his circumstances and lot determined for him to one where he had an increasing power of choice as to how and where he was to do his work. But latterly, and very specially in our time, the movement has in some important respects been back again from *contract* to *status*. It has even been ineptly described by Herbert Spencer and others as a return to a new slavery. The mere empty freedom which included the right to starve is now at a discount, and the freedom which is most prized is the freedom to do right and to live one's true life. The new *status*, however, although it is infinitely richer and fuller than the old, because of the circles which have been described throughout the centuries, is *status* all the same.

Yet another way of describing this aspect of the evolution of labour in history is to say that it has been a movement from collectivism to individualism and then back again to collectivism. But of course the new collectivism is very different from the old. This movement of the labourer upwards to his own has also been described as being from anonymity to anonymity; from the anonymity of the slave—that is, when he was a mere chattel, a thing without a name—to the anonymity of the Trade Union or the employers' syndicate, when he is once again lost in the crowd.* But all through the circle which has been described, however it may be thought of, has been as far as possible from being a vicious circle. It has been fruitful all the way, even when it was a pathway of agony and tears. The moral and spiritual universe, just like the physical universe, is a sphere, and in the social life, as in true logic, there are blessed circles which are full of promise and performance alike. Yet on the other hand the saying must be borne in mind that in human development "there are no true cycles." It would be truer to say that history never repeats itself than to say the reverse. "The Greco-Roman world had only distant analogies with the feudal Catholic world; just as it in turn had only distant analogies

* *Cf.* footnote on page 444 of "Christian Ethics," by Newman Smyth: "Mr. Mackenzie has rightly singled out 'the impersonality of relations in an industrial community' as one of the 'conditions of difficulty' in our social problem. ('An Introduction to Social Philosophy,' p. 99.) Similarly Paulsen characterises this ominous feature of modern life by the phrase 'its fearful anonymousness' ('System der Ethik,' s. 687)."

with the revolutionary world. The great phases of human civilisation are contrasted rather than compared; they differ as infancy, childhood, and senility differ in the individual." To raise any cry about the modern movement being in the direction of a new slavery is peculiarly futile, even when the employer is seen to be in the grip of some great combine, or the workman is suppressed by a labour congress. The new *status* will be vastly richer than the old, inasmuch as it will have gathered into it the lessons of the ages; and in its turn it will become the starting-point for another movement which will put fresh emphasis on the rights of the individual from the standpoint of a new conception of the rights of that social unity for which and in which the individual lives and moves and has his being. And, all through, the question of duties will be even more emphasised in the new era than that of rights. But *solvitur ambulando*, and we shall now proceed to look at the labourer as a slave and see how he became a serf and thus passed the first great milestone on the journey upwards and onwards.

THE LABOURER AS A SLAVE

CHAPTER II

THE LABOURER AS A SLAVE

WHEREVER the gospel went it found the labourer a slave, and equally wherever it went it entered into conflict with the evil system. There may be room for discussion as to whether the conflict was always carried on in the best way; there can be none as to the fact that the whole spirit and purpose of Christianity are in absolute opposition to slavery in every manifestation of it, and that its entire influence was exerted against it from the first. It may be that it worked slowly, but it worked surely, and, as the record shows, on the whole, not unsuccessfully.

It is not necessary here or now to renew the horrors, or to dilate on the nameless atrocities of the old-world bondage which meant practically that all the working classes were slaves, and that the social order was a system of government by intimidation. It is probable, indeed, that at the beginning of our era society in the Roman Empire was not quite so rotten as would appear from the pictures of contemporary satirists and moralists. The very vigour of these denunciations and strictures shows that there were some to whom the evils which abounded were hateful. Such well-known stories as that of Flaminius, who had

a slave killed in order that a young friend who had never seen a man die might be delivered from such ignorance; or that of Pollio, who threw slaves into his fish-ponds that his lampreys might feed on human flesh as that on which they throve best, must be regarded as exceptional. Startling instances of cruelty to children might be gathered from British newspapers in our own era which it would be very unfair to use as if they represented the general state of affairs in our homes. All the same, so far as slavery was concerned the state of affairs was unspeakably terrible; vastly more so than negro slavery at its worst.* The one hope the slave had of humane treatment was his economic value, and even that was but a frail defence when lust and passion were aroused. There were no societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals or children in the pre-Christian ages; and no one would now be allowed to treat a dog as a slave might then be treated without challenge. A slave, too, could suffer many a wrong which would have no evil meaning for a dog. For the rest, from the viewpoint of the history of labour it is sufficient to lay emphasis on the fact that from the economic standpoint slavery anywhere is absolutely condemned. As a modern writer† has it, slaves

* Cicero throws a lurid light on Roman slavery when in speaking of the Prætor Domitian, who had crucified a slave for having been too eager in killing a wild boar at the hunt, he contents himself with saying, "that will perhaps appear harsh"; and when he apologises for being sorry when a slave died.

† W. R. Paterson, "The Nemesis of Nations," p. 326. A most acute and helpful study.

were at once the wealth of nations and their Nemesis. Wherever slavery has prevailed its baneful fruits have been the same. It was demoralising even to the best and most kindly disposed. It made beasts of the naturally licentious and cruel. It corrupted the family life.* It has turned fruitful lands into deserts, and has rendered a true and pure home-life impossible, alike for the slave-owner and his family and for their hapless and helpless chattels. It not only leads to economic sterility, but destroys the very foundations of good government and the very possibility of enduring law and order. Where the working classes are slaves there can be no genuine social organism as we understand that term, and hence it was that when Christ came in the fulness of time the whole civilised world was rapidly drifting into anarchy. As for free labour which is so essential to the well-being of the commonwealth, slavery began by making it despicable and ended by making it impossible. Some students have discovered certain compensations, but these are very visionary. It is said, for example, that slaves were the machinery of the ancient world, and that such structures as the pyramids of Egypt or the hanging gardens of Babylon could not have been built without them. But even if that were the case, the price paid for these colossal achievements was far too great; and in the end of the day no section of the community can afford to treat any other section as mere machinery, either in ancient or modern times.

* *Cf.* Dr. Vincent, "Commentary on Philippians and Philemon," p. 164.

Nor was it done with impunity in the old world. The machinery fearfully avenged its degradation. It has been claimed further by Comte * that considered as a military institution, slavery was profoundly beneficial both to master and slave. He argues that the military activity which was so indispensable for the protection of the industry of primitive society could not have been developed otherwise. It was necessary that when the warrior went abroad the slave should work at home. But the facts are that both in Babylon and Greece the slaves were compelled to be soldiers, and that war added greatly to their numbers since every prisoner became a slave. In the later days of the Empire of Rome slave merchants accompanied the armies, and the sale of prisoners into slavery was superintended by officers of State. The gods are just and the Power which is at work in the universe makes for righteousness. Such a hideous wrong to humanity as is involved in slavery could not but avenge itself; and when at the crisis of the world's need the new light of Christ broke, it was to nations weary and sated with lust that the gospel was preached which was to set new regenerating forces in operation and usher in a new era of liberation and reform. Slavery had ruined both the industry and the home-life of the people.† "The Athenians became the parasites of their slaves." In Rome both under the Republic and the Empire the middle classes were

* See "The Nemesis of Nations," pp. 104–105.

† See Wallon, "Histoire de l'Esclavage dans l'Antiquité"; also Paterson, "The Nemesis of Nations."

annihilated. "The bourgeois became a beggar." The extent to which the vile system prevailed is almost incredible now, but it must be insisted on if its full bearings on the labour problem are to be understood. It is not possible to tell exactly how the numbers stood at different times, but at a time when the population of Athens was two hundred thousand, only twenty-one thousand were freemen. In Attica, the home of culture and the home of freedom so far as freedom had then been attained, there were a hundred in slavery for every twenty-seven who were free, or nearly four to one. The historian Mommsen calculated that three-fifths of the population of Rome were slaves; while equally competent authorities have computed that in the Empire during the first century of the Christian era there cannot have been fewer than sixty millions of these sad creatures, without family, without religion, and without possessions. Once when it was proposed in the Senate that slaves should wear some distinctive dress it was objected that if that were done the servile classes would become aware of their numbers and strength, and the proposal was rejected.

In the old pagan world, then, the working man was a slave, and bad as things were in Greece and Rome, they were even worse under the fouler and more degraded cults of the further south and further east. The truth is that slavery was essential to paganism, and grew out of it. It was the necessary development of the principle that might is right; and while at first that principle was applied only as against enemies, it soon came to be applied as against all outsiders. As the

demand for slaves increased through free labour becoming less possible, and free and forced labour alike becoming less fruitful, war often came to mean raiding for slaves. Nor was it the least of the horrors of ancient slavery that many of the men slaves had once been free like their captors, and were as well educated and as fit to be free; and that many of the women slaves were as fair and cultured as their mistresses. Of, necessity, too, the application of the vicious principle could not stop short with outsiders. It was inevitable that sooner or later it should be turned against the weak and dependent members of the community, and that it should end in finding fresh victims even in the family circle. When once such a gangrene had taken hold it could not but spread, and it blighted everything it touched. And the theories of that old world showed that slavery is essential to paganism, just as its practices did. Even when they made it manifest that it raised serious problems for them, the wisest of the Greeks were unable to conceive of a State which did not rest on slavery as its industrial basis. Plato, the wisest and greatest thinker of ancient times, of whom it has been justly said that all philosophy since is just Plato rightly understood, not only accepted the degradation of the slave as a social necessity, but actually confused the artisan and the slave in his Republic. So long as their guardians who were to control and direct them were properly selected and trained, the people—the slave community, that is—were to be left to their own devices even in the ideal State. As for Aristotle, the father of all science, he went still further, and affirmed that slavery is an ordinance of nature which has created some to

command and others to obey, a theory of society which in practice is as fatal for the slave-owner as it is for the slave. He held that there are occupations, such as those which demand special physical energy, in which no freeman could engage without degradation; and in harmony with this we find that a horror of mechanical work was an outstanding trait of the later Greeks and Romans. Spartan law specifically forbade freemen to engage in such work, while Cicero has it: "We admire a rich purple dye, but we despise the dyer as a vile artisan." And if the retort be made that there are indications that such a theory is not without support in certain quarters in our own day, that just means that there are many pagan elements in our modern life and thought, and that paganism is still true to itself. The vanquished naturalism of the heathen world ever seeks to avenge itself on Christianity, and does so in the social and economic sphere as well as in the sphere of worship and doctrine; but whatever its triumphs, there can be no doubt as to what the gospel has to say about the Aristotelian theory of labour and the labourer. Even the Roman jurists were frank in their opposition to the doctrine that slavery is an ordinance of nature. According to them, it was founded on force and contrary to the laws of nature, which view all men as free. Yet, whether founded on force or on so-called natural law, slavery was an integral part of their theory of the universe, as essential to their entire scheme of government and social life as it was to the scheme of Aristotle.

The gospel, then, found slavery everywhere in possession when it began its beneficent career

among men; and found it everywhere blighting the home, the social order, and the State. Very specially, for our purpose, must the fact be emphasised that it found it exerting the most disastrous influence on free labour and on the very conception of what labour is. On these two essential points it joined issue with the world-forces from the first. In so acting it assailed what was then, as it still is, the strategic point. From the moral and economic standpoints alike everything stands or falls by the place which is given in life and doctrine to free labour. It was, of course, inevitable that slavery should put free labour under the ban. For long agriculture occupied an exceptional position, but even it had to succumb, until the very fields were tilled by chained gangs of slaves. Shepherds alone seem to have remained comparatively free, probably because of their mobility. But the rule which had hardly an exception, was that to work with one's hands was a thing for slaves, and for them alone. All sorts of tradesmen—carpenters, smiths, shoemakers, tailors, and the like—were kept by slave-owners in later times, not only for their own use, but that they might be hired out for the profit of their masters. Entire factories and workshops came to be supplied with men in this way, and the free labourers who had to work alongside of these skilled and unskilled slaves were not only degraded thereby, but ultimately found it impossible to compete with them in the labour market. The result was that they had to make their choice between becoming slaves themselves, swelling the ranks of the *clientèle* of some rich man on a footing not much better than that of slaves, or of being

paupers who were fed and clothed at the public expense, to their own great detriment and humiliation, and a constant danger and menace to the State. Slavery is far more than twice cursed. It blights everything it touches even afar off. It ruins every one who comes within its sweep, as if it were a veritable upas-tree. Even where work was done by free labour among the civilised nations to whom the gospel came, it was usually done not by freemen but by freedmen; that is, by those who had formerly been slaves, and were still for the most part dependents, and, worst of all, had still the slave spirit, which is one of the deadliest of the curses which slavery brings. The only analogy to this class in modern times, from the economic and social standpoint, is to be found in the "mean whites," "the poor white trash" of the slave States in the American Union. This degradation and destruction of free labour is one of the inevitable evil fruits of slavery which can never be overlooked in any discussion of the history of labour. The glory of the gospel is that it makes men fit to be free; the curse of slavery is that it makes it impossible for men to be free. There can be no true social organism without free labour, and free labour soon dies out when slavery enters in. It becomes a stigma and a disgrace to be a labourer.

Among the peoples of antiquity there was, however, one which differed from all the rest alike in its conception of slavery and free labour and in its attitude to them; and this exception is not only the exception which proves the rule, it is as significant as the rule. As the author of "The Nemesis

of Nations"* puts it, "Nothing in ancient history is more remarkable than the mild slave laws of the Hebrews. They alone had a genuine conception of human liberty. 'Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant which is escaped from his master unto thee; he shall dwell with thee; even among you in that place which he shall choose in one of thy gates; where it liketh him best; thou shalt not oppress him.' This tremor of kindness ran through Canaan at the very moment when Babylon was heaping oppression on her slaves. In Israel legislation was undertaken on behalf of the slaves; in Babylon only on behalf of the masters. In Babylon the slave was an animal and a chattel. In Israel he was a person." Historians have mentioned it as a remarkable fact that the Jews were rarely slaves because their religion rendered them almost useless to heathen masters. But it may also have been due to the fact that they themselves so seldom kept slaves after the ordinary pagan fashion. It is not to be disputed that slavery existed among the Jews as it did among all the nations of antiquity, but it was an altogether different institution among them from what it was in Greece or Rome, to say nothing of Egypt or Babylon. The atmosphere was not the same, and in later times the sect of the Essenes † were not alone among the chosen people in their opposition to slavery as contrary to the dignity of man; a great divine conception full of promise for the days to come. Not

* See "Nemesis of Nations," p. 113.

† Philo says of the Essenes that there was not a slave among them, but all were free, mutually working for each other (Schürer, "The Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ," Div. II., vol. ii. p. 198).

only were the status and treatment of their slaves, such as they were, altogether different among the Jews from what they were anywhere else, slavery occupied a far smaller place in their national economy from what it did elsewhere. At the time of the return from the exile, for example, there were six freemen to every slave among those who returned to the Holy Land; and even if that is not quite decisive, it indicates a proportion vastly different from that which prevailed in Greece, where there were often three, or even four, slaves to one freeman. It is also significant that in the Old Testament there is no mention of slave markets which were so common elsewhere; and while there are references to runaway slaves and to the evils which resulted from the cruel and unlawful treatment of slaves, there are no traces whatever of the servile insurrections which were such a conspicuous and baleful feature of Roman history.

The lot of the Hebrew slave among his fellow-countrymen was not oppressive. As compared with what prevailed elsewhere it was hardly even irksome; and when the unique provisions of the year of Release and the year of Jubilee are borne in mind, it might almost be said that it was not slavery at all, as slavery was understood in that old pagan world. The lot of foreign slaves in bondage to Hebrews was not so favourable, but even they were treated in a humane and even brotherly manner. As contrasted with slaves elsewhere they were recognised as having certain rights. If, for instance, a slave were maimed by his master he had to be set free; while if a female slave were taken by her master as a subordinate

wife, she could not thereafter be sold to another master. If she ceased to occupy the position to which she had been raised she had to be set free. Man-stealing, too, which was of the essence of the system in other lands, was a capital offence among the Hebrews. All through the Old Testament legislation the leaven of religion and humanity can be seen at work, a veritable anticipation of Christianity. The sanctity of manhood was taught and practised; and slavery in Palestine was never such as to degrade the slave beneath the level or condition of a man as it did everywhere else. The just and compassionate spirit and character of the religion of the Old Testament nowhere emerges more distinctly than in the way in which the lot of the slave was made tolerable, at a stage in the development of the race and of labour when emancipation was not yet possible. The atmosphere was humane and in some respects even genial; and those who know what was going on in other lands can hardly fail to see that it was of God. Those defenders of the faith who deem it wrong to teach that there was progress in moral conceptions throughout the Old Testament record of revelation are not only oblivious of the facts of the case, but are depriving themselves of much that proves how Divine the Bible is and how graciously God was leading His people in the only pathway in which it was then possible for them to walk. It is truer of slavery than of any other old-world institution that in order to remove the blight God had to wall His people in, that through them He might bless all nations and lead them on to the heights to be revealed in Christ.

The place which was accorded to free labour among the Jews is also as remarkable and significant as the modifications of the otherwise universal system of slavery which are to be found in their legislation and practice. The fact that with the Hebrews the slave-owner shared in the work which was done by his slaves of itself did much to remove the worst abuses which have to be deplored among other peoples. In the earlier ages as they are depicted in the books of Judges, Ruth, and Samuel, we find rich and poor, high and low, engaged together in pastoral and agricultural pursuits;* while for the later ages the fact that both Joseph and Jesus were carpenters and Paul and Aquila tentmakers shows in a very vivid fashion how different things were among the Jews from what they were all around. Indeed, the place which free labour had among the Hebrews, when studied in the light of its degradation and disappearance among the Greeks and Romans, is of itself sufficient to prove that slavery, as they knew it, was vastly different from the system which prevailed among the Gentiles. And this encouragement and honouring of free labour was an integral part of the Jewish legislation both earlier and later, and in no sense an accident. Under the influence of the spirit which breathes all through the Mosaic law and practice the shepherd and farmer had a high place in Israel; while the husbandman and gardener

*_Cf._ Job xxxi. 13–15. Job treated his servants as persons, not as possessions. "This treatment," says A. B. Davidson, "was forced on him by the feeling that all men, his servants and himself alike, are children of the same God who will avenge wrongs done to any, whether they be bond or free." _Cf._ for New Testament, Eph. vi. 9, and the Epistle of Barnabas xix.

attained great skill and proficiency all through the Holy Land. Nor is it enough to say that the soil and climate conduced to this, for they themselves did much to provide these better conditions for such labour. By means of terraces cut out on the slopes of the hills they were cultivated almost to their summits, and even the rocky ground was made fruitful by mould being put on it. The promised land of the Hebrews flowed with milk and honey as much through their own industry and skill as through any advantages of situation and soil. Their loyalty to free labour was thus twice blessed. It filled their land with plenty, whereas slavery makes a garden a desert; and it prevented slavery from attaining such proportions or assuming such a character as to blight their homes and destroy their faith. Those who think of the Jews mainly as lenders of money or hawkers of old clothes should study them at their work while they were yet a nation. Mining for copper and iron was vigorously carried on, and even before the Exile such trades as carpenters and masons had become distinct from each other. There were potters and fullers, too, and even shaving had become an occupation by itself. At the beginning of the Christian era many places had names which were derived from the trades with which they were specially associated: such as Arbal, from its rope-walks, and Kafar, from its potteries. "Love labour" was a favourite maxim with Schemaiah, the teacher of Hillel; while the Kabala Judah said, "If a man does not teach his son a trade it is as if he had taught him to steal." A famous digger of wells in the time of our Lord said to a famous Rabbi at the time when the Rabbis were at their greatest, "I am

quite as great a man as thou art." "How so?" demanded the Rabbi. "Because no less than thou I supply the wants of the community." What a difference between such a sentiment and Cicero's reference to the dyer as a vile artisan! And this difference between the standpoint of Israel and that of all the other nations comes out in the entire impression which the study of the literature of the Jews makes on the reader even more than in any scattered sayings which have come down to us. It is impossible not to feel that the atmosphere throughout, as regards labour, is not essentially different from that of our own literature; whereas the foul odour of slavery assails us everywhere in the classical writings. It was only after they were scattered over the face of the earth that the Jews betook themselves to commerce, and in particular to trafficking in money. They abandoned agriculture and husbandry only when it was no longer possible for them to follow these occupations; the effects of the changes which made them a nation of usurers and pedlars have been as momentous for the peoples among whom their lot has been cast as they have been for themselves.

In view of this preparation in the Old Testament it is not surprising that the New Testament everywhere honours labour and that, from the first, a place was found for it in the Christian Church which it had never attained anywhere else. Through it the nobler conceptions which had obtained among the Jews were applied the wide world over and were spiritualised even as they were universalised. That the Lord Jesus Christ Himself had grown up in the home of an artisan and had Himself been a working joiner must have made a tremendous im-

pression on the life and thought of the age, as the Empire began to come under the spell of His gospel for the weak and heavy laden. That His great apostles were "the rude common men of the workshop, the farm, and the fishing-boat," and like their Master had worked with their hands; and that St. Paul, the most famous of His evangelists in the regions beyond, continued to work at his trade after he became an apostle—the tentmaker having an advantage over the fisherman in that respect—must also have done much to spread and deepen the conviction that a new thing had happened among men.

No wonder that labour is extolled in the Epistles and is set forth as one of the outstanding means whereby Christians could glorify God and commend their Saviour to their fellow-men. Even the slave could do that by his loyalty and truth, and how much more the free labourer. Through his labour he could provide honestly for himself and those dependent on him and could give to those in need; although he must often have found it difficult to do this. Free labour was to be the great means by which Christian charity was to manifest itself, and even more than free labour this first-fruit of it was a new thing under the sun.* Free labour was an end in itself, and at the same time it and the new dignity which had come to it were to be the foremost means whereby slavery was to be destroyed at the roots and the new era ushered in.

Thus and thus only could the master evil be undermined without arousing an opposition which

* In his recent "Early Church History to A.D. 313" Professor Gwatkin dwells on the fact that the *organisation* of charity was a Christian invention.

would only have added to the horrors and been fatal to the end in view. The power of vested interests and inveterate habit, yea, the very genius of paganism, were thus to be sapped and destroyed, as the sunshine melts the iceberg which has defied the storm, as by the spirit of the living God. Nowhere is the antagonism between Christianity and paganism more essential or more clearly defined than in this connection. As has been shown, the higher the degree of culture which was attained the greater was the depreciation of physical toil, and the more persistent the determination not to take part in it. But in the new era we find the chief of the apostles, the man who is sometimes said to have been the real founder of Christianity, preferring to support himself by the work of his hands to being dependent on his willing hearers and converts. The difference is not one of degree but of kind. According to Plato and Aristotle manual labour, even that of the merchant and freeman, distorted the character of the workmen and rendered them incapable of the highest forms of life. It was not in such pursuits that the moral and spiritual development of the personality of the worker could be looked for. But the Lord Jesus gathered a company of working men around Him to be associated in His great enterprise with Himself, also a working man, that the new faith which claims to be final and absolute might be proclaimed and spread. There was nothing in any phase of Greek and Roman religion which was in any way calculated to act as a corrective to the attitude which their philosophers encouraged towards the labourer and his work. As a matter

of fact their religion had much to do with creating such a spirit and with proving to subsequent inquirers that it is the inevitable attitude of unregenerate human nature in its selfishness and pride. But in the gospel labour was not only ennobled and consecrated, it was used to hasten the silent revolution by which slavery was doomed and ultimately destroyed. That this difference in attitude was essential and not accidental is brought out not only in the writings of the two systems as they confronted each other on the field of the world, but on every page of history as their respective principles have been embodied in actual deeds among the nations. More than any other part of their teaching what the Fathers taught about the dignity of human labour was revolutionary as against slavery. The obligation to work was made inseparable from the law of love. Work was regarded as indispensable to the perfection of Christian character.*

It must be frankly admitted, however, that it has been and still is a stumbling-block to some and a puzzle to many that the revolution by which this great change was brought about was a silent one, and that the New Testament has so little to say about the great master evil, the great open sore of the age in which it was written.† Yet it

* "The organisation of industry owed not a little to the influence of the Church in the first enthusiasm of its faith" (J. S. Mackenzie, "An Introduction to Social Philosophy," p. 77).

† "The gospel never directly attacks slavery as an institution; the apostles never command the liberation of slaves as an absolute duty. It is a remarkable fact that St. Paul in this Epistle stops short of any positive injunc-

may turn out that this feature of the work of emancipation instead of being a ground for censure should serve as an example of how enduring work in the moral realm can best be done. It is not surprising, perhaps, that our Lord Himself should have said so little which bears directly on slavery, since He always dealt with the actual and concrete evils of His time as they confronted Him, and He does not seem to have been personally brought into contact with the evils of slavery during His earthly ministry in such a way as to call for His intervention. The Jews were practically free from the curse under which all other peoples were then groaning. He and His immediate followers were all free labourers; and it was His mission to lay down the principles, to live the life and to make the atonement, which would ere long sound the death-knell of the whole system. But it was altogether different with the apostles in their work. Not only did Christianity come into contact with slavery wherever it went, it had ere long both slaves and slave-owners in the membership of all its Churches. In every province into which its ubiquitous and fearless emissaries went the evil system confronted them in all its vileness, naked and unashamed. Yet the thing which seems to us to be so unspeakably monstrous is nowhere categorically or passionately denounced, but instead is referred to, we cannot say dealt with, only in an incidental fashion. Masters are exhorted to be just and kind. Slaves are exhorted to be obedient and patient. The horror itself is never condemned

tion. He tells Philemon to do very much more than emancipate his slave, but this one thing he does not directly enjoin" (Lightfoot on Philemon, p. 389).

as a hideous outrage on everything human and Divine. We cannot even claim that it was denounced as abnormal. St. Paul was proud of his friendship with Philemon, the saintly Colossian slave-owner, and praises him highly. It was at his instigation that the runaway slave Onesimus went back to his master, if not to his slavery. This attitude of the early Church has been felt by many to be all the more oppressive that, as a historian of the Empire declares, "the sum of all negro slavery is but a drop compared with the sufferings of the Roman slaves." The slave men were often teachers and tutors in the household, and held posts such as steward and factor. The slave women were not half savage blacks, but often of the same race as their cruel abusers and tyrants.

Considerations such as these have once and again led expositors, short-sighted and one-sided or prejudiced and hostile, to declare that Scripture is on the side of the abominable "institution." But those who have faced the whole situation in the light of all the circumstances in which these early Christians had to do their work, have been convinced that most emphatically this is not the case. It is not even necessary to plead what might well be pled, that even inspired apostles may not see all the implications of the gospel all at once; for it is becoming increasingly evident that the method adopted was chosen deliberately, and was abundantly justified by its fruits. Any decree of the apostles regarding slavery, such as that issued by the Council at Jerusalem regarding circumcision, would have had weight only with the Christians, and for long they were either few or uninfluential. It would be as fair to blame

some obscure sect in India for not ending the intemperance which is the shame of the British Empire as to blame the Christians of the first century for not openly assailing slavery as it then prevailed throughout the Empire of Rome. Yet they did set themselves to destroy the evil, and they swept away the barriers which stood in the way of emancipation in a fashion all the more effective that it was indirect. A frontal attack would have been fatal all round. Many attempts had been made to set the slaves free by insurrection, some of them within the memory of the apostles, but these had only added to their misery and forged their fetters more firmly. The great claim which can fairly be made for the method of the early Church is that it succeeded where every other had failed; and it succeeded because it went to the very roots of the evil. There never has been a force so revolutionary as the Christianity which assailed the corrupt society of the Græco-Roman Empire. Over against the denial of the rights of humanity it set the doctrine of the love of God and of the spiritual dignity of man as made in the image of God. Over against egoism is set the demand for universal charity; while over against the prevalent contempt for free labour is set the life of Jesus of Nazareth the Carpenter and the epoch-making declaration that in Him there is neither bond nor free. By implanting within the sad and sated pagan world the seeds of emancipation and renewal it did what that world needed most, and what alone could save it.

In the new Christian society all alike were the servants of the Lord Christ and members

one of another. No servile war was proclaimed, that would only have deepened the woe, and the fear of it must ever have been in the minds of the responsible leaders. But the miserable creatures who had been accounted mere soulless bodies to be broken or sold when old or useless—mere animals, with the one distinction that they could be the instruments of lust, and could suffer as other animals could not—were raised to the consciousness of their true position as rational and made for God, by being called to a new life, a life of freedom in God.* This Divine revelation has wrought such a marvellous work that it is hardly possible for those who now live in the light of it to realise what it must have meant then. In every sense of the word it was life from the dead. But even yet we can understand in part what it meant from what we know of its results, which were both great and immediate. Not only were the slaves who were won for Christ saved thereby from the worst horrors of their condition, through the restoration of their self-respect; the work of emancipation, which is never to cease until every form of slavery has disappeared, began at once.

The process was as gradual and silent as the rising of the sun after the darkness of the night,

* Lecky has it that the new religion was at the outset actually and without any figurative exaggeration "a proclamation of the universal brotherhood of man." Miss Cobbe says, "Not till the age of the Gospels, of Plutarch and Marcus Aurelius, does the feeling that we call philanthropy seem to have emerged into conscious activity." Mr. Kidd says, "Greek morality at no period embraced any conception of humanity."

but it was as sure. Jesus had given a new place to brotherhood, and had revealed a new conception of material good; and by the middle of the first century we find the new leaven working even outside the Church. A kindlier tone and a gentler spirit began to be manifested among the Stoics, and Stoicism was paganism at its best; and the most natural explanation of the change, as well as of the gradual ameliorations which began to be introduced into the legislation of the Empire, is some kind of acquaintance with Christianity and the new atmosphere of mercy which it was creating. Within the Church itself we find St. Paul describing a slave convert as a brother beloved, and looking for his reception by his offended master as such; and by the year 140 we find as the Bishop of Rome one Pius, who seems to have been the younger brother of the author Hermas, who was a slave. In the beginning of the third century, too, Callisthus, who had been a slave himself, became bishop in the Imperial city, showing how surely, if also somewhat slowly, the new spirit and doctrine had become an integral part of the life and creed of the Church. It was the Spirit of the Lord working in the hearts and lives of slaves and slave-masters alike which finally made the gigantic evil, which servile insurrections had only aggravated, disappear like some huge iceberg which has defied the winter's blasts, but melts away before the genial rays of the summer sunshine. "In many ways," as Dr. Horton has it, "the early Church was a prophecy; it sowed a seed for distant centuries; and in the matter of equality it proceeded by securing the spiritual reality, without denouncing that institu-

tion of slavery which seems to us now so glaringly inconsistent with the gospel."*

In the new Society which Christ instituted all the old disabilities which had cribbed and cabined and confined mankind were cancelled, and the problems connected with labour and those to which slavery gave rise were dealt with just as those were which were connected with the position of women or the standing of the Gentiles. The old distinctions were simply transcended in the unity which made all things new. God had made no distinction in grace between the bond and the free, and, inconsistencies apart, the Church made none. The slave was taught that he was a son of God. His master was taught that he must treat his Christian slave as a

* "The kingdom of God with its sublime universalism offers its invitation to all men as children of a heavenly Father, and binds those who follow His call into a Society. . . . In the Christian Church the poor man found the civic rights of the Divine kingdom accorded to him without reserve as God's own child. . . . To the slave, the lowest and most unhappy class of Græco-Roman Society, the rights of man were restored. In the Church they heard the magic tones of the words: 'Ye are men for whom also Christ has died; redeemed, to whom the same position belongs in the kingdom as to your masters.' Masters also heard in the Church the solemn admonition that they were brethren of their slaves, since both had taken upon themselves by voluntary choice the yoke of obedience to Christ (1 Cor. vii. 21 ff.; Eph. vi. 5 ff.). When Paul uttered thoughts like these in his letter to Philemon, in which he interceded for the runaway slave of the latter, he was writing the charter of emancipation for the many millions of slaves who were held down by a minority in a degrading bondage" (quoted in Hastings' Bible Dictionary; *sub voce* servant, from Mangold, *Humanität und Christenthum*).

brother in the household of faith, with the inevitable result that emancipation became increasingly common. It was not an uncommon thing for a believing slave when examined before a judge to say, "I am not a slave. I am a Christian. Christ has set me free." Growing out of the same conception, so full of promise, we find that scarcely any Christian inscriptions over the dead speak of them as slaves or freedmen, but only as the slaves or freedmen of Christ; as if human slavery should not even be mentioned in the kingdom of God, in which all are free. In every Church there were slave members; men and women who loved much because they had been forgiven much. Masters were sometimes won for Christianity through their slaves and slaves through their masters. There were slaves, too, who sealed their testimony with their blood, with a dignity and courage as great as that of the noblest patrician. They both lived and died with all the nobility of those who were freeborn in Christ. Blandina the slave girl and her mistress alike died for their Lord, who had died for them. Perpetua, the noble matron, perished for Christ along with Felicitas the slave. It was everywhere taught by the Church, and in many ways the teaching was attested as real, that altogether apart from any adventitious value which wealth or rank might seem to give, the human soul was of infinite worth in the sight of Him who came to seek and save the lost, and in doing so had died a slave's death. Burial inscriptions and pictures, too, sometimes show a master standing before the Good Shepherd with a band of slaves whom he had liberated at his death and who were plead-

ing for him at the last judgment. In this and in other ways, both indirect and direct, the work of emancipation was encouraged and held up to emulation. And it went steadily on and was often practised on a large scale, even if some of the figures which have come down to us must be accepted with many qualifications. St. Melania is said to have emancipated 8,000 slaves; St. Ovidius, a rich Christian and martyr in Gaul, 5,000; Chromatius, a Roman prefect under Diocletian, 1,400; Hermes, a prefect in the reign of Trajan, 1,250, and so on.* When St. Paul sent Onesimus back as a brother beloved he was only acting up to the Christian ideal, and in the light of that ideal the foul system withered and finally perished, like some foul fungus which can only live in the dark. Christ, in the days of His flesh, had preached the gospel to the poor and had gathered the needy and wretched around Him so systematically that it was used as a reproach against Him, and the early Church was happily sufficiently loyal to Him and His example to earn the same reproach. Even if it was the case that sometimes the man with the gold ring and goodly apparel was received with special favour, it was also true, as the cynic Lucian bears testimony, that the "Legislator of the Christians has persuaded them that they are all brothers," while Celsus jeered at their success because it was due to their winning slaves and children and women.

It would appear that the dispensation of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper had much to do with the spread of this new atmosphere of

* Lecky's "History of European Morals."

brotherhood, in which the monstrous thing gradually disappeared. The Romans had strictly excluded their slaves from taking any part in the patriotic worship, and the death-warrant of slavery was really signed when slaves and slave-owners found themselves on an equal footing as the guests and brethren of Christ. Things could never be quite the same after master and slave had sat side by side at the Love Feast and the Lord's Supper. That there was no difference in colour to be overcome, and frequently none in point of education and attainment, of necessity rendered the work of assimilation and emancipation all the more rapid and sure when once it had begun. The difficulties which are still so real in the Church life of the Southern States of America can seldom have been felt in the Old World, so far as fellowship in worship was concerned. There was no racial line and there is probably as much difference between an East End congregation and one in the West End of London or Glasgow as there was between the slaves and their owners in the primitive Church. The gospel, too, had brought such gladness into the lives of the slaves, whom it filled with a new hope, that their servile condition became a trivial thing in comparison with the spiritual freedom into which Christ had called them. Not that any unworthy acquiescence in or submission to degrading conditions of life was encouraged, as some have alleged. The same suggestion has sometimes been made regarding the otherworldliness of Christians in our own time, and the error now may enable us to appreciate the error regarding these earlier days.

Eager reformers have asserted that modern Christianity is the enemy of reform inasmuch as it encourages an obsequious contentment with things as they are. It is said to dwarf the present through comparing it with the glory beyond, and by teaching that Christ can be served as truly amid want and oppression as in freedom. But the friends of the gospel cannot but feel that the charge is painfully ridiculous and altogether lacking in justification. Their wish cannot but be that the indictment, that our Christianity has made so much of spiritual things that it has robbed the movement for social reform of support which it would otherwise have received, had more basis in solid fact. Other-worldliness is not the Church's danger in these days, but just ordinary worldliness of the bad sort, and there is little reason for believing that it was ever very much otherwise. Those who in any age bring this charge against the gospel can have very little acquaintance with Church history. It is altogether beyond doubt not only that all through the centuries Christians have been the most eager and successful reformers, but that whole-hearted submission to the holy will of God has never meant slavish submission or blind obedience to the will of man. Even those whose theories might appear to have tended to fatalism have seldom or never been fatalists in practice. Historically viewed, for example, Calvinists have always combined the most strenuous advocacy of the liberty of the subject with the most strenuous insistence on the sovereignty of God. So, too, when St. Paul enjoined the slave members of the Corinthian Church to be content and by the grace

of God to turn even their toil as slaves into Divine service, he was careful to add that that did not preclude them from securing their freedom if they could. "If thou mayest be free use it rather."* This does not mean, as some have held, that they were to make use of their servile condition even if freedom came within their reach, but that while they were to rise superior to their slavery as Christ's freemen even while they were slaves, they were rather to make use of their freedom if they could be free. And there must have been a sense in which the yoke of slavery was never felt to be so unutterably galling as when those who were under it had been set free by Christ. How intolerable it was that those whom He had redeemed and called to be His brethren should be driven like soulless cattle, and driven by those who were still in bondage to unforgiven sin! In later times this was explicitly used as an argument against serfdom, and it cannot but have been operative all through.

The state of the case, then, would seem to be that while the New Testament contains no specific legislation regarding either free labour or slavery, it set the forces in operation which made labour honourable and which subverted and overthrew slavery, and necessitated its final disappearance. There were many ebbs in the flowing tide, but

* 1 Cor. vii. 21. In his commentary on Philippians and Philemon in the "International Critical Commentary" Dr. Vincent takes this text to mean that the bondman was to use and improve his condition for the service of God and to abide in it even though he might have the opportunity of being free; but the opposite view which is held among others by Calvin, Lightfoot, Evans, and Findlay is to be preferred.

it rose inch by inch until slavery was at last drowned out. In the middle of the fourth century an anathema was pronounced by the Synod of Gangra against any one who encouraged slaves to leave their masters, which probably shows that some were giving this encouragement. Later in the same century Chrysostom had to denounce Christian ladies for cruelty to their slaves, which shows how much paganism there still was in the Church. But, according to Lecky, by the twelfth century slavery was very rare, and by the fourteenth was almost unknown. And the longer the situation is studied and understood the more will it appear that the method adopted was the only hopeful one; and even those who groan in spirit at the apparent indifference of the New Testament to this sum of all villainies cannot but admit that the slow sapping process which was followed accomplished what no great frontal attack could have done, and in a case like this the result justifies the method; and nothing succeeds like success. The first thing which had to be done was to create a new social situation, a new social world we might call it; and that cannot be done in a day. Without such a new atmosphere abolition would have led to nothing but disaster, even if abolition had been possible; and just as the new environment was created, as only the gospel could create it, the dark shadows began to disappear and slavery died a natural death. Slavery, as we have seen, was an integral part of the old Roman constitution, and that wonderfully homogeneous system and the interests bound up with it could only be affected gradually. It need scarcely be wondered at, therefore, that it took time even for believers

in Christ to discover and develop and, above all, apply the bearings of the gospel ethics as regards the civil and social relationships. It cannot be claimed that even yet, in all the light of the revealing centuries, we ourselves have realised everything that Christianity involves as regards the brotherhood of man. If we had, it is not possible to believe that such a huge anachronism as war would still occupy such a prominent place in every Christian land. It is probable that the first century was far from being the slowest of the centuries to appreciate and respond to the teaching of the Cross regarding the clamant evil of the time; and the thing which we have most cause to regret is that the process of discovery and application was not continuous but was ere long so rudely interrupted. The antagonism between Christianity and paganism regarding labour was fundamental and admitted of no compromise or accommodation, and when in the conflict of the early centuries paganism avenged itself for many a defeat, by forcing its way into the sacred confines so that the captive often conquered its conqueror, there was confusion and even reaction in relation to slavery and free labour.

To this day many Christians in all classes of society are under the influence of pagan conceptions of labour, and view it from a heathen standpoint and not from the standpoint of Christ. Their ideal seems to be to do as little as they can, as if work were an evil and not a good. Even as regards slavery our surprise that Philemon kept slaves may well be modified when we find that in 1747 George Whitefield, the great evangelist, and a man much used of God, expended £300,

which the people of Charleston had given him, in buying land and negroes, and that in his will he left the Orphan Homes in which he was interested and other buildings, together with all the land and negroes he had acquired, to the Countess of Huntingdon for the same purpose as that for which he himself held them.* Writing, too, in 1751, Whitefield says, "as to the lawfulness of keeping slaves I have no doubt." "It is plain to a demonstration that hot countries cannot be cultivated without negroes." Of course, the slaves Whitefield possessed were negroes, and he would never have dreamt of trafficking in white men; but if it took intelligent and earnest Christians so many centuries to get beyond the colour line and to see the iniquities of slavery quite apart from any question as to whether its victims were white or black, we need not be surprised that the first generations of Christians did not see all at once everything that is implied in the gospel, or that even ecclesiastical officials and communities were for a while owners of slaves. It is probable, indeed, that very early in the Christian Church a distinction arose very much analogous to the more modern distinction which was made as to colour. The first concrete step taken towards the assertion of the right of all men to be free was that freedom was claimed for all Christian slaves on the twofold ground of their baptism and that it was shameful that the brethren of Christ should be in bondage. Perhaps at first the claim was even more limited than that, and was that the

* That the biographer of the great evangelist refuses to try to discover excuses for this act, which he describes as odious, just shows how far we have travelled since 1747.

distinction between bond and free should be held as cancelled within the redeemed society of the Church; that it was iniquitous that Christians should be in slavery to fellow Christians. But such a claim could not but widen, and widen it soon did. It had all emancipation in its sweep, since the fatherhood of God and the consequent brotherhood of men in Christ is of universal application. And just because the source and basis of this claim were what they were, it could not but grow, until at last freedom was claimed not only for the Christian slaves of Christian masters, and then for the Christian slaves of all masters, but for all slaves whatsoever. But it took time for the Christian community to see that what was claimed for some must ultimately be claimed for all; just as it took time for the later generations to see that what they claimed for white men must also be claimed for black, and as it will yet take time for our own advanced and advancing age to apply the spirit of Christ and His gospel all round the circle of our life, and in particular to every phase of the labour problem.

In claiming that this silent revolution which led to a new attitude to slavery and a new conception of the moral dignity and value of labour, both of which spread by and by among those who were not actually Christian, was due to the gospel, it is not in any way suggested that there were no other ameliorative forces at work even in the first ages of our era. Economic and political forces were at work as well as religious, in the direction of amelioration if not of actual emancipation. In the first Christian generations long-

continued peace throughout the Empire had led to a certain softening of manners which in some instances produced a change of sentiment regarding the slave class. The Imperial diplomacy, too, was tending in the same direction. Yet even those who have laid most emphasis on the better tendencies of the Imperial period have come to the conclusion that while latterly there was a tendency to ameliorate the condition of the slaves on principles of general humanity, there was no hint of an end being put to the baneful system, apart from Christianity. To use a modern distinction, Christianity, as distinguished from every other influence at work, exercised not merely a tendency towards emancipation but a tendency to produce emancipation.* And this leads to a difference not in degree merely but in kind—to a distinction which is fundamental. With no desire whatever to minimise the other ameliorative forces which were at work (for God fulfils Himself in many ways) alike in economics and politics, the claim must be insisted on that it was Christianity which did the enduring work and sowed the seed out of which the tree of liberty has grown in every age and land. It alone of all the influences at work was whole-hearted in its determination to set the bondman free, and it alone had the energy or motive power which was needed to realise its ideal and achieve its purpose. The lamentation of those who had merely the "tendency towards emancipation" ever was that their well-meant efforts only seemed to make matters worse and to add to the misery of

* See Westcott, "Gospel of the Resurrection," 3rd ed., p. 72.

the enslaved. The open secret of those with the "tendency to produce emancipation" was and is the gospel of grace which is the power of God to every one that believeth, and which when it enters a man's life renews the springs of his being. Christianity is not merely a life, as has been so often and so proudly set forth, it is life, and life alone can overcome the mighty enemies which have always stood in the pathway of effective reform and genuine emancipation.

Nor is even that all the difference between the Christian attitude to slavery and that of the most enlightened paganism. By the time the gospel had had a century or so to make its influence felt, the record shows that the best of the Stoics were in practical agreement with Christianity that slavery might be treated as non-essential in the realm of religion and ignored by the moral man in his quest after the highest good. But whereas the Christians were filled with sympathy for the slaves, the Stoics at their best had nothing but indifference and even contempt for them. The very likeness between the two attitudes only serves to bring their essential unlikeness into bolder relief. The Stoics and the Christians were not moving on the same plane, they were not living in the same world. A new pity had been born in the hearts of those whom Christ had brought in from the wilds of heathenism, as they realised something of what the great pity of God had done for them in Christ; and this new and Divine compassion which filled their eyes with the love-light and made their lips tremulous with sympathy was very fruitful in effort and good deeds. Whatever

the early Church, battling as it was for existence and beset with overwhelming foes, could do for the oppressed was done and undeniably well done, until a new atmosphere was created, not only for the Christians, but to some extent for the pagans as well. That this leavening process was always going on, even in the midst of persecution, can be seen by the way in which the influence of the Church manifested itself at once when the Empire became officially Christian. The essential antagonism between the gospel and the iniquitous system became open and manifest then, but the nature of it showed that it had existed as truly in other phases during the preceding period when it could not operate openly. In Constantine's reign one enactment after another appeared which made for reform; and each of these achieved something more definite than its predecessor by way of ameliorating the condition of the slaves. Then as before, however, the Christian writers and thinkers alone had a true appreciation of the social problems of their time and how they could be solved; and the years 312, 314, 316, 321, and 322 have each their note of progress. And if the frequency of the interference suggests how evil the state of affairs must have been, it also tells how great and urgent was the desire to amend it. Laws were passed making it homicide to poison a slave, and providing that even sixty years of bondage could not deprive any one who had been freeborn of the right to demand their liberty, and securing the rest of the Sabbath for the labourer.*

* The influence of the Christian Sabbath on behalf of labour has been great. In 321 Constantine appointed Sunday as a rest day for all artificers; a provision, however, which

Manumission, too, was encouraged, while at the same time new barriers were put in the way of dragging those who were free down to slavery. The forces which tended to produce emancipation were everywhere at work, and were everywhere showing how truly they were of God by what they were accomplishing in the face of vast opposition.

For many centuries, however, although the death-warrant of slavery had been signed long before, no unequivocal word of thoroughgoing condemnation seems to have been uttered either by Church or State. Yet many deeds were being done which were even better than words, valuable as some frank words of detestation would have been. Very early we read of slaves who had been set free being presented for baptism by their former masters, and of churches being made asylums where hunted slaves might find refuge until the ministers of Christ could plead for them. Gradually too, but surely, like the rising of the sun, the idea took possession of believers that baptism should involve freedom. In the earlier centuries of expansion the reports of many Church Councils tell of resolutions which were passed in favour of better treatment of slaves; and at

did not apply to those who worked on the land. In the Apostolical Constitutions (Book 8, Sec. 4, Par. 33), it is provided, "Let the slaves work five days, but on the Sabbath and the Lord's Day let them have leisure to go to church for instruction in piety." In 558 Clotaire, King of France, forbade all servile labours on the Lord's day. So in England alike under the Saxons and under the early Normans the rest day was secured by Christianity for the bondmen, and a marvellous boon it must have been.

length explicit condemnation of the whole system came from outstanding Christians if not from the Church Courts. Pope Gregory the Great was still far in advance of his age when he taught towards the end of the sixth century "that slaves should be freed because Christ became man in order to redeem us," but it was a great emancipating thought. In the ninth century we find that St. Theodore of Studium had the originality and courage to issue the injunction, "thou shalt possess no slave either for domestic service or for the labour of the fields," and the reason given for this injunction was even more significant than the injunction itself, so much of promise did it involve for the days to come. Christian men were not to keep slaves because "man is made in the image of God." Nothing could prove more clearly how great was the progress which had been made during these silent centuries and what the lines were along which it had been made, even if it also suggests how slow the advance had been. It lets us see how men's minds were being led under the guidance of hearts which had been renewed by Divine grace, and eyes with the new light of the gospel in them. It provides us, too, with an object-lesson in the way in which the gospel does its most enduring work. Instead of denouncing the evil in words which have been unmeaning for most, until men were able to hear them, it gradually created an atmosphere in which slavery could no longer exist.* "Man is made in the

* For details see Wallon, "Histoire de l'Esclavage." Like so much else that is best in our modern life, freedom for the slave was foolishness to the philosophers and a stumbling-block to the theologians before it justified itself; but it was

image of God" sounded the death-knell of slavery wherever it was understood, and just in proportion as it was understood in these early ages shackles were broken and the work of liberation advanced. Not only so, but just in proportion as it is understood in our time will the evils akin to slavery which still exist gradually disappear as slavery did. Four centuries after St. Theodore's time Pope Clement IV. used the same argument against the serfdom into which by his time slavery had gradually passed. "All men," said he, "have the same origin; they live under the same sky. . . . The immense difference between the Creator and the creature effaces the slight distinction between the king and the serf. The distinction of birth is only an accident, a human institution. . . . God distributes the gifts of the Spirit without regard to the division of classes. In His eyes there are neither nobles nor villeins."

Slowly but surely all the presumptions both in Church and State came to be in favour of freedom for all, and for the abolition of slavery. The steady drift of feeling and opinion was in the direction of recognising the inestimable value of liberty. The new leaven showed itself in many ways, as, for example, in the growth of the opinion that the marriage of a slave in the Church made him *ipso facto* a freeman. That was a great advance on the old law, that slaves could not enter into a legal union at all; and as late as the ninth century Basil's enactment, that the priestly benediction should hallow the marriage of slaves met with much opposition. And all through the

really involved in the religion of the Christian man whenever he saw what that actually meant.

Christian faith was ennobling free labour, and leading it to do work which still endures, such was the heart which was put into it; and that meant much as it must always do.* In the end, indeed, it meant everything, so far as the progress of the labourer was concerned. Idle parasites became industrious workers; marauding bands settled down to agriculture and the various trades without any longer feeling disgraced thereby; and the reformation which was thus begun has never really ceased since, and never can cease until all men everywhere are both busy and free, finding their divine calling in their daily work and worshipping God therein. There have, of course, been many interruptions in the progress, as when the disappearance of slavery was delayed by the inroads of the Barbarians and the breaking up of the Empire. But although paganism once more proved that slavery is its natural and necessary accompaniment, and the evil system got a new lease of life, the captives ere long led their captors into captivity; and even this cataclysm proved to be no more than a temporary interruption. In the very midst of the storm the good work went on, and then, as now, the gospel regenerated men and nations not by external changes but by renewing the springs of life. Most emphatically the kingdom of Christ is not of this world, and social reform, vast as it is, is no more than a by-product,

* "Much stress was commonly laid on the Christian duty of pursuing some labour as a discipline of body and mind, even apart from the necessity of earning a living" (Cunningham, "Growth of English Industry and Commerce," p. 141. He refers to Maitland's "Dark Ages," p. 160, and to Morison's "Life of St. Bernard," p. 18).

an *obiter factum* of the Great Deliverer. The gospel begins in the heart and with the restoration of true personality, and then it gradually works outwards, modifying, rectifying, and renewing everything it touches; and the outward changes when they come at length are simply the final seals of its success.

Before passing from this branch of the subject it must be made quite clear that, historically viewed, the definite advance which was made in these early ages towards liberty for all did not gather so much round any actual emancipation which took place, either on the larger scale or the smaller, as round the gradual process by which the slave became a serf. Augustine attributed slavery to the Fall, and spoke of the relation of master and slave as a part of family government; and the real hope for the future gathered round the mitigations and ameliorations which nowadays often seem so trifling. It was the trend of Christian opinion which was of supreme importance; and it is not always easy to say what the trend at any particular point was. Gregory the Great, for example, might seem to turn the edge of Augustine's position by teaching that since the original state of man was one of freedom, those who emancipated bondmen were worthy of all praise; but the same Gregory, in spite of his great declaration about freedom through Christ, presented slaves to a convent, and exerted himself to recover a fugitive slave who belonged to his brother. All the same, the movement towards freedom went steadily on through the proclamation of the dignity of human nature as made in the image of God, of the equality of all before

Him, and of the yearning of Christ that all should turn to Him and live. And just as the true lineage of the Reformers is not to be found in sporadic movements outside the mediæval Church, but in the faithful men and women within, who kept the fire burning on the altar even in the darkest days, so the true line of the social revolution which has not yet come to an end is not to be found in any particular legislation or manumissions as much as in the general movement by means of which the entire level was permanently raised. It is there we must find any promise or potency for the days to come. Not that we are at liberty to belittle the service rendered to the holy cause of freedom by those who on all sorts of occasions and for all sorts of reasons actually set their slaves free; any more than we would belittle those who are called Reformers before the Reformation. But, all the same, the enduring work was done, and the work that counts, by those who helped to raise the whole tone of thought and action with regard to labour and in regard to the toiling masses, and begot new hope in these masses themselves. And for us to-day the thing which is of supreme significance is how this work was done. "There is no method of reformation so powerful as this," wrote the late Duke of Argyll, "if alongside any false or corrupt belief or any vicious or cruel system we can succeed in planting one incompatible idea; thus without noise or controversy or clash of battle those beliefs or customs will wane and die. It was thus that Christianity without a single word of direct attack killed off one of the greatest and most universal curses of the pagan world—the ever-deepening curse of slavery."

That, then, was the method and that was the grand result. When we enter on the history of the Middle Ages it is no longer slavery but serfdom which confronts us. We have no longer slavery in which the owner, as capitalist, owns the labourer, but feudalism, in which the capitalist owns the land and has a lien on the labourer; and the manner in which the change was brought about is even more important and significant for us than the change itself. Along with economic and political causes which were also at work, or, better, through economic and political causes, it was brought about by the influence of Christian truth and by the power of the gospel of Christ; and it is thus and thus only that the kingdom of God can come in our time. It is no more possible to disentangle the influence of Christianity from the other forces which were at work in the early centuries of our era than it is possible to disentangle it in our time from the other ameliorative agencies which are making all things new. A steamer may be aided in its voyage by the tide and the wind as well as by its engines, and it may not be possible to tell how much of the resultant speed is due to each, although we know that at best the other forces are only auxiliary to the steam. Yet society in that far past was less complex than it is now, and it is even easier to see how the gospel made for freedom then than it is to see that now, when even its assailants use the Christian vocabulary and have adopted its ideas. We can study these earlier ages, too, without bias; and to see, as we have seen, that it was Christianity which, directly and indirectly, brought about reform and emancipation then is a strong argu-

ment in favour of the claim which is not without other support, that it is Christianity which has always brought about reform and amelioration, and that it is to it we must look for the perfection of the work of liberation, and for the time when there shall be nothing to hurt or destroy in all God's Holy Mount. That Christianity as we know it is too much sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought and has lost something of its abandon and infectious joy is only too true; but the revival of faith in its power to save to the uttermost and to solve every problem, a faith which is so amply justified by a study of the facts, would sweep all that away like mist before the rising sun.

THE LABOURER AS A SERF

CHAPTER III

THE LABOURER AS A SERF

IT is not possible to say exactly when slavery ceased and serfdom began to take its place, but that arises from the nature of the case. The point of transition was nowhere very definite, and as may be imagined it varied alike in time and manner in the different countries. Froissart, for example, who spent six months in Scotland in the reign of David II., was greatly impressed by the fact that the Scottish peasants were not as the peasants of France. They were not abject in spirit as the others were, although their mode of living was very humble, and when the French knights after their manner rode carelessly through their crops, they signified their disapproval with such emphasis that the strangers were eager to depart. As for England, Lecky says that slaves were very rare there in the twelfth century and almost unknown in the thirteenth. But it is probable that the transition really took place earlier than that. It is even probable that, as is often the case in such references, Lecky in that statement employs the term slavery in its more comprehensive use as including what is now specifically meant by serfdom, for by that date

in England even serfdom was beginning in turn to be modified into something more favourable to the labourer, and with new promise in it for the future.

For just as it is not possible to say when slavery began to assume the milder form of serfdom any more than it is possible to say exactly when the morning light begins to break after the darkness of the night, it is not always easy to say exactly wherein the difference between slavery and serfdom lay. Sometimes the terms slave and serf are practically synonymous;* and just as an anti-slavery orator from the United States once found in an English town that his description of the food of a negro slave did not rouse his audience as he expected, some serfs may have been worse off both as regards food and shelter than some slaves had been. The American lecturer found that the rations which he had denounced were more liberal than those of some of his hearers, and in the same way many a serf must have paid for his new freedom, or comparative freedom, in new hardships and privations. So Dr. Menger and others say that vast multitudes in the twentieth century are in no way better off—they may be worse off—than the slave or feudal vassal.† Yet the difference in the possibilities of the two relationships was infinite, and the step taken in the history of

* As when Mr. Green says on p. 238 of his "Short History," "The slave, indeed, still remained, though the number of pure 'serfs' bore a small proportion to the other cultivators of the soil."

† See Miss Stoddart's "The New Socialism," p. 34, a learned and lucid exposition of Socialism as it now is.

labour was unspeakably great when the personally owned slave, who could be bought or sold like a horse or a cart or put to death like a sheep, became a serf who was bound to the soil, rather than to the owner of the soil, and changed hands only when the land on which he lived and laboured was changing hands. It told that the light was breaking at last, that a new day had begun, and that the curse was lifting; that men were now breathing a different atmosphere, and that old things were passing away and all things becoming new. Christianity, as we have seen, had effected improvements even in the condition of the slave. The power of the owner had gradually been defined and limited by the law of the Empire, and it meant much that slaves had gradually acquired some rights before the law. It meant, for one thing, that the law had come to recognise their existence, that the moral energy born of the life and teaching of Christ was getting down to the lowest depths, and that His light was shining even into the sunless gulfs where the slaves lay in dumb despair. But the change from slavery to serfdom had in it the promise of changes vastly greater which were still to come. In order to set slaves free a formal manumission or emancipation was required, whereas all that was needed in order to set serfs free was the growth of a public opinion which rendered it more and more impossible to enforce a claim of ownership, as if there could be property in human beings, and which finally made such a claim altogether impossible. It was thus that the next great step was taken and the serf became a free servant very much in the same way and

under the inspiration and guidance of the same influences as the slave became a serf. Slaves passed along the highway to freedom by way of serfdom, for the most part without observation and certainly without revolution, and thus they ultimately became free labourers, as they could not have become directly from slavery. It is in this fact that the special significance of the serf stage, in the evolution of the labourer, is to be found; and it must not therefore be treated as if it were just the slave stage under a modified form. It has a place all its own in any inquiry as to how we have travelled so far as we have done towards the social millennium, and how we may travel all the way.

Speaking of English serfdom, or villeinage as it was called, Hallam has pointed out that it was perfectly relative, and formed no distinct order in political economy as slavery had done. No man was a villein in the eyes of the law unless some master claimed him as such. To all others he was a freeman who might acquire property and sue for it or dispose of it without impediment. Whether, therefore, the difference between the slave and the serf lends itself to exact definition or not, it had in it the promise and potency of a new world. Whether or not the serf was always as well fed or clothed as the slave had been, he was a man, in a sense in which no slave had been, and that was a fact full of hope for the days to come. Unless this relativity of the new relation be kept in mind the importance of the serf in the evolution of the free labourer who is also a voter and citizen cannot be understood. Trivial as the step taken when the slave became

a serf may sometimes appear to have been, it was in reality the biggest step ever taken in the history of the labourer, and involved the other steps which have been taken since, or are yet to be taken. The slave had no hope of ever working his way to freedom, nor had he any share in the fruit of his labour. He was a chattel and not a man. The villein, however, at least in the later stages of serfdom, owed his lord a certain fixed tribute in return for protection, and after this debt had been discharged he could work for himself and by thrift might succeed in purchasing his freedom. He had thus a sort of *residuary interest* in his own life and labour, and to that extent, hard as his lot often was, it was not quite so forlorn as that of the slave.

Thus was the gap between the slave and the servant filled up bit by bit through the progress of the serf. In the time of the Saxons slaves were regarded as the stock of their owner who had to answer for any offence they might commit against a third person, just as he might answer for any mischief done by his cattle. That was doubtless the case then in Scotland as well, and Malcolm Canmore's devastations on the North-umbrian borders are said to have filled the hamlets of the Lothians with slaves. By the time of Alexander III., however, we find that the lowest social order in Scotland no longer consisted of slaves, but of serfs who were bought or sold with the land on which they dwelt, and were forbidden under pain of death to remove from the place of their birth. In Norman England, too, we no longer find slaves, but serfs, who had not only some place before the law, but had a remedy

at law against the violence of their masters and a tribunal for their wrongs. Under favourable circumstances they might even purchase their own freedom or that of their children out of their earnings, so far had the labourer already travelled from the time when no bondman could hold property of any kind as against his master.

Not only so, but the growth of towns was proving to be a new and fruitful factor in the situation. The inhabitants of these towns, which were the nurseries of freedom, were freemen; and residence for a year and a day in any chartered town in England barred for ever any right which an owner might have had over a serf. As for Scotland, the condition of affairs there improved so steadily that in the middle of the fifteenth century it was deemed necessary to decree among other sumptuary laws that "no labourer or husbandman wear on workdays other than grey or white; and on holidays only light blue, green, or red; and their wives the same with kerchiefs of their own making, and that it exceed not the price of forty pence the ell."* That takes us into a new world compared with slavery, which had no promise in it of a better day to come, and required no sumptuary legislation. And so it was that the old evil state of things could only come to an end by such a process as we are now tracing, and the true forces which made for the ultimate emancipation were those which thus made the slave a serf, since it was in that way alone that the whole body of the workers could

* The last claim of serfdom proved in a Scottish court was in 1364 (Barnett Smith, "History of the English Parliament," vol. ii. p. 128).

be lifted up to a new economic level. Slavery was a system calculated to endure as long as certain social conditions endured; and even the philanthropists of the Empire never contemplated its final and complete disappearance. Important, too, as was the work of the gospel in the early ages, as it led to actual emancipation for many slaves and better conditions for all, its greatest service was rendered in the gradual leavening of society by the new moral energy which it engendered and the new spiritual conceptions which it everywhere spread, and which led to the inevitable transition from slavery to serfdom. For of necessity the new relation of serfdom, when once it was attained, was temporary and transitional in a Christian State, as slavery, essentially pagan as it was, had not been; a mere stage in the onward march which was destined to lead the labourer to complete personal freedom and to all that such freedom should bring.*

In endeavouring to see how this pregnant change came about, and in particular in seeking to show how Christianity did most to bring it about by means of its moral and spiritual ideals —ever growing for those who had the eyes to see and the hearts to respond—and above all else by means of its moral and spiritual energy,

* There are those who blame the mediæval Church for the universal serfdom of the Middle Ages, but this was mainly due to the introduction of the Roman Law into the Germanic lands. That law did not provide for such a class as free peasants, and worked against such a class by treating them all as *servi*. Wallon says that the enslaving provisions were generally modified on ecclesiastical lands.

there is, of course, no suggestion that in this era, any more than in the preceding ages, Christianity was the only ameliorative force at work. There were other social and economic influences of the most important and influential sort, although even in that connection it must be borne in mind that the gospel does not do its best work as a thing apart, and that it is just through such forces that it mostly manifests its power. Whenever our analysis is sufficiently profound it usually transpires that the gospel not only manifests its spirit mainly through such forces, but that it gives them their being and influence.

That can be seen in this connection at once when we find that foremost among the ameliorative forces then at work, so far as the Empire at any rate was concerned, was the long era of peace which was brought about by the all-embracing dominion of Rome. That peace brought the slave trade practically to an end by drying up the main source of supply. Early in the Christian era the supply of captives of war, formerly so abundant and continuous, began to cease, and ere long could no longer be depended on at all. Slave-markets, as a consequence, began also to disappear, and with them one of the most degrading and disastrous features of the whole system came to an end. An immediate and necessary result of this disappearance of the supplies was that the slaves became very much more valuable, and consequently were better cared for. Another result, and an important one, was that changes of ownership among the slaves became fewer and fewer, and in this way they became more and more firmly attached to the lands on

which they worked and to the households in which they served. But such fixity of situation was of the essence of the new serf relationship which we are tracing as contrasted with that of the slave, and must have done much to prepare the way for it, and therefore for ultimate freedom. Alongside of this, and at the very heart of it, the new conceptions of Christ were steadily making their power felt. Labour was no longer considered to be dishonourable after the old fashion; and from the second century onwards the effect of this new atmosphere, combined with the diminished supply of slaves, can be clearly and increasingly seen. The ice was at last beginning to melt, and the rays of the Sun of Righteousness were ever growing stronger as the Christian propaganda was everywhere prosecuted.

Another of these contributory influences, economic and social, which were at work in the Empire, making for the fixity of place and situation which had so much bound up with it for the days to come, was the system of hereditary fixity of tenure or profession which grew up among the freemen all throughout the Empire. For one thing this helped to diminish the distance between the free labourer, in this sense bound to his trade, and the slave, now more than ever bound to his trade and the place of his toil. Not that the change among the freemen was wholly for the better; for as things turned out it favoured a process of reaction which went on alongside of the progress which was being made. When serfdom took the place of slavery it seems in many cases to have involved the free labourer in its sweep as well as the slave, both alike

being caught in the bigger net in respect of their fixity of trade and place. It was, therefore, a case of levelling down as well as of levelling up for the labouring classes; a complication which had an instructive parallel when Roman Law was introduced into the Germanic countries. That law worked, it may be unintentionally, against the free peasantry since it did not provide for such a class but treated all such as servile. The earlier reaction, however, was no more than an eddy in a flowing tide—a tide flowing slowly but surely towards freedom for all.

There was yet another of these social and economic influences which must be co-related with the gospel in the work of amelioration—the system which grew up of working the land by means of labourers who were described as *coloni*. That also made for the same fixity out of which the new relation of serfdom was to grow. These *coloni* were personally free labourers, but they were attached to the soil very much as the serfs in the Middle Ages were, and ultimately they seem to have formed the standard for the slave class, and to have marked the level to which the slaves were gradually raised. The classical description of these *coloni* in the fourth century would serve perfectly as a description of a serf nine or ten centuries later. As *adscripti glebæ*,* if they abandoned their holdings they could be brought back and punished. They were

* These *adscripti glebæ* were under an obligation to perform a certain amount of work for their owners, and beyond that they might amass property for themselves; a definition which might suffice also for the later English villeins, or serfs.

not free to marry off the domain on which they were settled, and their children were fixed in the same status as themselves. They could be subjected to corporal chastisement in certain circumstances, and could even be put in chains if they persisted in attempts to escape. Yet they could acquire property and had certain legal rights; and legal remedies were provided for unjust demands made on them or for injuries wrongfully inflicted. This, of course, meant a condition vastly superior to that of the slaves, and it meant much in the evolution of freedom for the labourer that this should become the standard for servile labour; and while it cannot be asserted that slaves were everywhere raised to this level of the *coloni*, the economic result of this new relationship was that it opened up the way to serfdom and to all the promise which that involved for the future.

One other stage in this movement by which slaves were raised to the higher and more hopeful level of serfdom is marked by the appearance of of a class who were called *quasi-coloni*, and who, by the year 377 A.D., could only be sold if the land on which they lived and worked were also sold. And, so far as the Empire is concerned, when the serf begins to appear on the scene he represents *colonus*, *quasi-colonus*, and slave alike; and probably also to a large extent many of those who had been free labourers. The meshes of the new net were not so fine as those of the old, but the net itself was larger and, speaking in general terms, it may be said that just as the labourer was everywhere a slave when Christianity began its beneficent work, so when mediæval

Europe began to take shape after the convulsions which gathered round the fall of the Empire, the labourer was everywhere a serf. By that time the new relationship was practically universal, but, as can readily be understood, there were many interruptions in the process by which it came about that serfdom was as universal as slavery had been. The fearful miseries of the days of the later Empire, and in particular the terrible poverty of the labouring classes, by whatever name they were called, which was due to the utter disregard of all economic considerations, greatly hindered anything like continuous advance even at its slowest. A historian of the period makes the suggestive remark that "the Roman Law tended to regard serfs as slaves." He makes it, it is true, in connection with the later mediæval conflict between the feudal spirit and the persistent influence of the older law; but it indicates how complicated and difficult the earlier movement must also have been, and how long it must have taken to get anything like legal recognition of the changes which had been slowly but surely taking place under the influence of moral and economic forces. Just as the peasants in the later Middle Ages usually found that the law, or what passed for law, was in the hands of its interested interpreters and on the side of the oppressor, so there must have been many in these earlier ages who were dragged back again, in the name of the law, into the depths of the bondage out of which they had been gradually rising. Everything tells against the man who is down, and the slave would have few friends as against the law, which had not yet risen to the conception of a free peas-

antry and had been made in times when the slave had no existence in the eyes of the legislature.

In the later Middle Ages, when it was no longer slavery which was being left behind but serfdom in its turn, much of the bitterness of the conflict and of the fierce hatred which existed between the labourers and their lords was due to the dexterous manipulation of the old Roman Law in the interests of privilege and oppression. This was specially true in Germany, where there was no strong central authority such as the Crown became in England. There was no limit to the ingenious devices by which the serfs were treated as if they were still slaves and the free peasantry as if they were serfs, and by means of which they were deprived of the benefits of the social and economic changes which were taking place, and preparing for the Renaissance and the Reformation. Tradition, indeed, asserts that one reason why Martin Luther's father was so enraged and indignant at his student son abandoning his intention of being a lawyer was that he hoped much from one so brilliant. As the son of a peasant and likewise a great lawyer he could have taken the side of the common folks in their perennial conflict for freedom and in their unceasing battle against legal chicanery and legalised wrongs.

When history begins to throw light on the social condition of Saxon England the lowest classes consisted of slaves who were the absolute property of their owners and of ceorls who were so numerous that they formed nearly one-half of the entire population. The slave population was relatively small, forming as it did about an eleventh

of the population, or some twenty-five thousand in all; and there are indications that their lot was quite as hard in practice as it was in theory. It is probable that the great majority of them were the descendants of the conquered inhabitants of the land whom the Saxons had found there when they took possession. To these others had been added in various ways, as, for example, those who had been enslaved as a punishment for their crimes. The ceorls were in much the same position as the serfs in the Empire, being bound to the land which they cultivated. When the troubles which followed the Norman Conquest had so far spent themselves that some order can be seen, various changes are discernible. The Saxon slaves had disappeared and had become the Norman villeins, which meant on the whole that some progress had been made. It is probable, indeed, that just as in the Empire there was a levelling down as well as a levelling up, and that some free labourers found themselves degraded to being serfs at the time when the slaves were lifted up to that position, so in England when the ceorls rose in the social scale by becoming villeins, there were some who had formerly been free labourers who were forced back a stage and were also made villeins. On the other hand, however, some of the Saxon ceorls seem to have escaped the villein stage altogether, and to have become independent freeholders, and, according to Mr. Hallam, the ancestors of the English yeomanry, to whom the nation has owed so much, and whose disappearance has been so much deplored. And, as has been indicated, there was much economic promise in the relation-

ship of the villein or serf, inasmuch as he was the sure precursor of the free labourer. For every one but his master he was a freeman, and had a definite standing in the eyes of the law.

This promise, however, was very slow in being realised, and the movement by which the villein actually became a free labourer was so gradual that as it was when the slave became a serf, so it was when the serf became a servant; it is not possible to say "lo, here" or "lo, there," or to tell exactly when the transition took place. In this case also, however, important as it would have been to have known when the change took place, it is vastly more important to be able to tell that it actually occurred and with what promise it came.

The development was naturally much more rapid in some countries than in others, but even in England, which was in the van in this as in so much else that has blessed mankind, although serfdom may be said to have died out with the fourteenth century, it lingered on in some districts until the end of the sixteenth century. Significantly enough, the most definite proof we have of the steady progress which was being made during these silent centuries is to be found in the efforts which were put forth to stem the tide. In the reign of Richard II., for example, we find a petition presented to Parliament asking that villeins should not be allowed to send their children to school in order to fit them for advancement in the Church; * a prayer which reveals that many were rising out of their semi-servile condition to that

* See Green's "Short History of the English People," p. 251.

of freedom by becoming priests. And that leads us naturally to consider what it is our main business to consider, how far the motive power for the progress which was being made, and which was calling forth the protests of the reactionaries, was being provided by Christianity and its gospel. It also shows that we may enter on the inquiry with some measure of assurance that it was Christ who was setting the captive free, since, as this petition reminds us, the Church was the great leveller in these darkest days. It has never been quite true that all men were equal either before the law or before the Church; but it has always been truer of the Church than of the law. Such a career, for example, as that of Cardinal Wolsey, and there were many such all through the Middle Ages, must have meant much, more perhaps than we can appreciate now in these days of triumphant democracy.

To take a butcher's boy and set him among princes and kings and make him mightier than the mightiest of the barons, was a notable achievement when pride of birth was almost an insanity and caste was omnipotent in every other sphere. Not only was it an extraordinary object-lesson for those who sat in the seats of the mighty, it must have done much to save the driven and down-trodden masses from despair and to kindle the fires of hope and ambition in many an eager young heart. And it was of the very essence of the gospel that the essential dignity of human nature and the infinite worth of man as man should be thus emphasised by those who spoke in its name. The Rule of St. Benedict, dating from the beginning of the sixth century, runs: "Let not one of gentle birth be put before him

that was formerly a slave, unless some other reasonable cause exists for it . . . because whether bond or free, we are all one in Christ, and bear an equal rank in the service of one Lord; for with God there is no respecting of persons." Amid all their preoccupations and prejudices the greatest ecclesiastics were teaching that it was not the law of nature but the law of nations which held so many in bondage for whom Christ had died, and the great word of Pope Clement IV., already quoted, that the distinction of birth is only an accident, and that in the sight of God there are neither nobles nor villeins, but those over whom He yearns, embodied a truly Christlike thought which could not but bring forth good fruit. It is, of course, once more undeniable that there were other social and economic forces at work tending to make even villeinage no longer possible, and that we have no warrant for saying that its abolition was directly due to the action of Christianity alone. But it is nowise a Christian interest to deny that this was so, for God fulfils Himself in many ways, and the gospel works along many lines and in company with many allies. Yet the cautious and careful pronouncement of one who is an acknowledged expert and authority regarding this transition of the serf into a servant is that "the most powerful influence at work in bringing about the change was the slow action of religious motives on the conscience of the masters." *

* "From the time when in the year 681 Wilfrid emancipated the serfs at Selsey we find the influence of the Church working in this direction. It was not only that the Sunday and festival rest made the lot of the labourer lighter; but

As it was in earlier ages, so it was in the Middle Ages. It was Christ who lifted up the slave, and it was the same royal, gracious hand which turned the serf into a free servant. And if at times we are puzzled to explain how it was that the truths of the gospel worked so slowly either in ancient Rome or in mediæval England, it must be borne in mind that the number of those who give themselves up unreservedly to be obedient to Christ has never been very large. Not only so, but it is as learners rather than as critics we shall most hopefully trace the process of amelioration, since in all probability it will continue on the same lines, in the coming days, even if it does gain momentum and proceed with greatly accelerated speed. The power which first of all lifted up the slaves and then delivered the serfs is the only power which can make the vast masses who have been brought together into our cities and towns by modern industrial conditions, free in reality as well as in name. Its operations will probably be slow and indirect still, and the millennium can only come quickly if the nations learn to look in the

there was a constant pressure exercised in the direction of emancipation" (Cunningham, "Growth of English Industry and Commerce," p. 156). "Whatever security was gained for the husbandman and the plough, for the weak and unprotected, was gained by the struggle of the Church to maintain the Peace of God" (E. Semichon, "La Paix et la Trêve de Dieu." Quoted by Cunningham, p. 116).

"Whatever may have been the faults and excesses of the Church, there can be no question as to the tendency of its doctrines to exalt the altruistic ideal; and either directly or indirectly to raise the conduct prescribed by it to the highest level of human reverence it has ever attained" (B. Kidd, "Western Civilization," pp. 152–153).

right direction for inspiration and energy. But it is much to know where they ought to look.

Away back in the time of Ethelbert and Canute there were laws in England which forbade the sale of men and women to heathen masters, and under the influence of St. Wulfstan, aided by William the Conqueror, the slave trade, the principal seat of which had been in Bristol, was put down in Saxon England. Nor after a time was it otherwise in Norman England, or in that new and better England which was neither Saxon nor Norman, because it was both. Under the guidance of Christian men and women, and especially under the inspiration of Holy Scripture, the nation was led to see that "to buy or sell one for whom Christ had died" was a grave outrage; and gradually the principle was extended also to the kindred outrage of keeping Christ's brethren in bondage at all. In spite of all her superstition, the mediæval Church was as a lighthouse in the darkness, and even if the light often shone in a strangely fragmentary fashion, it did shine. She not only denounced bondage and encouraged manumission, she set her own bondservants free on a large scale.* Even where they were not actually set free the condition of the Church's serfs was better than that of other serfs, as was the case also later on with her vassals, as Sir Walter Scott points out in "The Monastery."

* It has been suggested that the great monastic orders did not emancipate their serfs as readily as they might have done because, ecclesiastic-like, they had persuaded themselves that they could not alienate corporate property. All authorities, however, are agreed that they made steadily for amelioration and for ultimate emancipation.

It was everywhere inculcated from her altars that to set one's serfs free was an act pleasing to God; and numerous charters and epitaphs all through the Middle Ages still record the gift of their freedom to those who had been in bondage, and that the gift was made for the benefit of the soul of the donor or testator. Then, as now, the forces which made for the perpetuation of the evil—selfishness and ignorance, class pride and hatred of change—were very mighty; but the moral forces and the economic forces which were likewise at work for reformation were mightier still; and in spite of all opposition the new era dawned at length, and a cubit was added to the stature of the enfranchised labourer. An English writer * in the year 1570, in no way partial to the Church, says that at that time, although serfdom was still recognised by the law, there were only a few serfs who survived; and he argues strongly that the vast change for the better which had taken place was due to the influence of the Christian religion; and while from the very nature of the case, where forces so subtle and so silent were at work, it is not possible to give either chapter or verse by way of proof, it is not open to doubt that that was a just claim. The fact, indeed, that this far-reaching change came about so gradually and so much without observation of men is a lesson for all the ages, our own among the rest. Nations may be born in a day; and in the moral realm ideas often ripen more in one glorious hour than they had seemed to do in long years before; but the teaching of the triumphs of the past is that it takes time, yea, much

* Sir Thomas Smith as quoted by Brace, "Gesta Christi," p. 251.

time, to secure the recognition and the application of the great Divine truths which alone can make all things new. It is so easy to see it all after it has been discovered and made concrete in human institutions and actual life; but for those who were groping for the light and doing the duty nearest them, it was a great step to take at the time, to pass from the conviction that it was shameful to traffic in or ill-use Christians, since they were the brethren of Christ, to the conviction that it was also a sin to keep any in serfdom, no matter whether they were Christians or not, since Christ had died for them and God had made them in His own image. But by and by even that long step was taken and serfdom went as slavery had gone; and another milestone on the highway of perfect liberty for the labourer had been passed. Another victory, too, had been won over darkness by the light which shines from Calvary and the Cross of Christ.*

Among the outstanding social and economic influences which were contributory to this victory the Crusades and the ravages of the Black Death deserve special mention. The Crusades did much to reveal the essential equality of men; or at any

* Yet although the light broke surely it spread slowly. At a Council at Westminster in 1102 it was declared unlawful to sell slaves openly in the market as had been the custom until then. In Magna Charta, however, more than a century later, the warden of an heir was prohibited from making "destruction or waste of the men or goods" upon the land under his guardianship, the men being still classed with the ordinary chattels; and the same clause appears in later charters till the first charter of Edward I. in 1297. But probably then, as now, the law was slow to recognise changes which had actually taken place and the light which was actually shining.

rate to show that any essential differences among them lay deeper than the accident of birth. Much of the glamour of the mediæval knighthood was lost amid the disasters which haunted these strange expeditions; and even on the battlefield peasants and artisans showed that they were as brave as those whom they had so long been taught to think of as of a different kind of flesh and blood. It was hardly possible for those who had shared in the common dangers and privations of the march and the battle along with their masters, and had seen how like they were in strength and weakness to themselves, to go back to the old life at home and be in subjection to them as they had been before. They could never again bow as they had done to the old traditions and the old prejudices. In Scotland, William Wallace, the greatest of the Scots, seems to have done for the common folk who rallied round him when the high-born were mainly recusants and traitors, what the Crusades did for their brethren in the South. The working man got a new sense of his importance and power. Both lords and labourers saw that patriotism and courage were not the monopolies of any class. Carlyle claimed that it was under John Knox that the Scottish people began to live, but this honour belongs to Wallace rather than to Knox; and all Europe discovered what the inspiration due to him meant when at Courtrai in 1320 some twenty thousand Flemish artisans defeated a much more numerous army from France, although it was largely composed of the best knights of the age. The sting of that epoch-making defeat, one of the really decisive battles of history, lay in the fact that the chivalry

of France fell "by the hands of villeins," as the Chronicler sadly laments. Out of this new consciousness of power grew the hope without which nothing worthy or enduring could have been achieved; and out of the efforts which this hope inspired a freer Europe emerged. The era of the common man as against the mail-clad knight had come, and in a very real sense the modern movement had begun. The brave peasants of Wallace, just emerging from serfdom, were the forerunners of the famous infantry which alike for the conflicts of peace and those of war has never known when it was defeated, and has never been permanently overcome.

The ravages of the Black Death were also closely bound up with the labour problem in the later Middle Ages. So many died of the plague that everywhere the value of labour was greatly enhanced. The labourer, too, grew in importance in presence of the great tracts of land which lay untilled because those who had worked them were now numbered with the dead. According to cautious estimates as many as eight hundred thousand perished in England alone, which meant about one-third of the population as it was then. The plague smote the children of the king equally with the children of the serf. There was not a house where there was not one dead; and in many houses no one was left alive. As a consequence wages rose at once; a fact which emphasises the important truth that the serf or labourer had now become a wage-earner. A nobleman whose crop had been harvested for £3 13s. 9d. in the year before the visitation had to pay £12 19s. 10d. in the following

year. This economic movement was, of course, in no way peculiar to England, any more than the determination of those in power to prevent the labourer from reaping the fruits of the change, if they could.

The battle between labour with its enhanced value and capital in alliance with ignorance of economic law was everywhere joined with the most varied results. But on the whole the cause of freedom advanced throughout the dreary cruel strife with privilege and use and wont. There are two great social struggles which were essentially campaigns in the labour war which show how this progress was made and what was the nature of it. They show on the one hand very clearly what serfdom was and on the other hand that, gradual as the process of amelioration was, it had its cataclysms. They were the uprising of the peasants in England in 1381, and the Peasants' War in the Reformation era. The conflict came earlier in England than elsewhere, since in this, as in so much else in the history of liberation, the English people were in the forefront. This was probably due in part to their insular and isolated position, especially after the wars in which Jeanne d'Arc had happily driven them from the continent; for anything which grew out of the Crusades and the Black Death was common to England and the greater part of Europe. In June, 1349, the very year of the plague, it was enacted by the English Parliament that labourers should not receive nor should masters pay more wages than had been paid before the plague, and that workers should be obliged to work for

the old rate of wages when required to do so. Two years later, in 1351, the famous Statute of Labourers, which was destined to remain on the Law Books for two centuries and a half, was passed in pursuance of the same determination to achieve the impossible. Again, in 1361, ten years later, it was decreed that labourers who were caught escaping from one county to another, or from the country to the town, in the hope of getting better wages, should be imprisoned and branded on the forehead.

The response to all this on the part of the labourers, a response which in some ways is the measure of the progress they had made from serfdom to freedom, was a vast underground, systematic combination of workers, the first English Trade Union, and twenty years after the plague year the wages of a harvest worker were double what the Statute fixed, so powerful did the combination prove to be. The peaceable movement, too, by which personal service was commuted for a money payment, went on apace and was full of promise for the future. The solution, however, was not to be altogether peaceable, and in 1381 the inevitable outbreak and trial of strength came in the rising under Wat Tyler, John Ball, and Jack Straw. The immediate occasion of the outbreak was the Poll Tax which had been instituted the year before, and one of the battle-cries of the rising told what the new spirit was which was abroad, "when Adam delved and Eve span, who was then the gentleman?" The insurrection was put down with a maximum of treachery and cruelty, and seemed altogether abortive, but in

reality it achieved its purpose. So far as the official Church was concerned it has to be sorrowfully acknowledged that the Bishops voted just as the Lords Temporal did for the repudiation of the king's promise that the villeins would be enfranchised; yet what the peasants demanded was tacitly granted, and although villeinage still lingered for a while in some districts it really died out very speedily after this momentous conflict.*

There is some consolation, too, in the fact that if the princes of the Church were blind to the leadings of Christ and deaf to the cries of His poor, the humbler priests who loved and laboured among the people were more loyal to their Lord, and did not fail to manifest the spirit of His gospel or to lead their flocks into the promised land. From that time onwards rural society in England began to assume the forms which it still in great measure retains; the chief, if not indeed the only, modification which has since been made being that which came through the

*"Since 1381, when the peasants were taught by the Poor Priests to use their power in the demand for the rights of humanity in the name of God and justice, no one has attempted to make serfs of the English labourers" (Van Dyke, "The Age of the Renascence," p. 18). This is too absolute, but it is a vivid American way of stating the truth. *Cf.* also another American, Longfellow, in "The Norman Baron," where, under the combined influence of the Church's admonitions and the fear of death—

> "Every vassal of his banner,
> Every serf born of his manor,
> All these wronged and wretched creatures,
> By his hand were freed again."

Law of Settlement and the Poor Laws, which in our own time have just been weighed in the balance and found wanting. The new freemen who emerged from villeinage enlarged the yeomen class already existing and did much to strengthen the cause of the commons alike in Parliament and in the country. "A hundred years after the Black Death," says Mr. Green, "we learn from a high authority that the wages of an English labourer 'commanded twice the amount of the necessaries of life which could have been obtained for the wages paid under Edward the Third.'" *

The connection, if any, between this great and fruitful conflict and the religious movement associated with the name of John Wiclif has been much discussed; and for our present purpose is, of course, a question of supreme importance. Some of the Reformer's champions have been at great pains to prove that he had nothing whatever to do with the labour revolt—a very unhappy conclusion were it possible to reach it with justice. It goes without saying that he had no sympathy with the excesses which were perhaps inseparable from such an outbreak of hatred and violence; and it has been put beyond any question that he gave no personal encouragement to the rising which took place only three years before his death.

All the same, there is an unmistakable spiritual resemblance between his teaching and the teachings which inspired the social revolution. It is probable, indeed, that the outbreak assumed a form which did much to retard the movement of

* "Short History of the English People," p. 250.

amelioration which had already begun, and that Wiclif's method would have been vastly different from that which was followed by the leaders of the peasants. But the true friends of the gospel and the true lovers of the poor and downtrodden over whom Christ yearns as one of themselves, can have no sympathy with Wiclif's would-be vindicators, either when they emphasise the warm support which they insist he always gave to the position and dignity of the Temporal Lords, or when they denounce the labour leaders of the time as sowers of sedition and democratic clamourers for equality. It is of the very essence of the gospel which the Reformer preached that equality is not democratic merely, but Christian; and it must never be forgotten that even grave and just historians have taken far too many of their ideas of the movement and far too much of their information regarding these early labour leaders from their bitter and often unscrupulous foes. It has been so all through in the records which have come down to us regarding such extremists and agitators as the Anabaptists and the so-called Levellers. The very cry which has survived to our time about Adam delving and Eve spinning shows that part at least of their inspiration came from the Scriptures, which were now becoming known to them; and a flood of light is shed on the character of many of the rebels by an incident connected with the burning of the palace of the Duke of Lancaster. When a plunderer was caught with a silver cup which he had stolen, he was thrown into the flames with the cry, "We are seekers of truth and justice and not thieves."

The truth is that unless the religious movement of which Wiclif was the leading figure, and which was already portending the greater reformation which was to follow by and by, had had its message for the long-suffering serfs of the time and for the labour problem of the age, its gospel would have been no better than that of the priest and Levite who passed by on the other side. As for the excesses which marred the movement, they were to be found on both sides alike, and so far as the peasants were concerned they were largely due to the blunders and selfishness of the rulers. In all the struggle there was nothing, on the side of the peasantry, so base and shameful as the treachery of the young King Richard and his councillors when they induced the people to disperse and go back to their homes in peace, on the strength of the most ample promises of redress and reform, when all the while their fixed intention was to slay them in cold blood. Far from repudiating that mediæval movement of the labourers as they sought recognition of their rights and an ampler share of the fruits of their toil, we rejoice to be able to claim it as largely due to the spread of New Testament Christianity. The social movement in the State was coincident with the Reformation movement in the Church just because God's good news was stirring yearnings for deliverance, as it could not fail to do, in the hearts of those for whom it was making all things new. Nor is it without significance that the labour movement of that time was in reality much more successful than the religious movement in the Church. Things have never again

been quite so bad for the labourers in Britain as they had been before that era, and that fourteenth-century labour movement is in close touch with all the progress which has since been made ;* but as regards the religious movement it is very doubtful whether Wiclif's work had any organic connection whatsoever with the Reformation in the reign of Henry VIII. Wiclif was not the Morning Star of the English Reformation, although he has been so described; whereas the Peasant Rising then was indeed the dawning of the day of labour reform in England. And who can say that it is not probable that the failure of the movement in the Church was due to the failure even of the Reformers to be loyal to the social logic of what they preached? There may indeed be something in the affirmation of a German historian† that the peasants' wars before the Reformation—and there were many of them, and these full of woe—were essentially different from those which came after that event, and that in the former the feeling which lay at the bottom was the purely human feeling of hatred of unjust oppression, whereas in the latter there was also present a powerful religious sentiment: the faith that men were fighting in the interests of true Christianity. But in so far

* In Mary Tudor's reign, two centuries after the time of the Black Death, a Spanish visitor remarked that "these English live in houses built of sticks and mud, but therein they fare plenteously as lords." There was rough plenty in these days, and in the Pilgrimage of Grace, which was partly at least a peasant rising, the peasants gave a good account of themselves.

† Hausser, "The Period of the Reformation," vol. i. p. 120.

as that distinction is correct—and it is only partially true—it must be borne in mind that Wiclif's movement was an anticipation of the Reformation in the sixteenth century, and that it was the new religious spirit which was then abroad in England which made men feel their oppression intolerable after a new fashion. It was Christ who was causing them to realise their manhood as they had never realised it before, and to awake to their rights.

And there is this additional fact to be borne in mind, that the men in whom these new aspirations were thus born were those who had been called to face the new severities and restrictions of the oppressive Statute of Labourers. No wonder, therefore, that they were filled with a berserker rage, and that they rose in wrath to cast off their chains. Far from being something to be apologised for, or something to be repudiated, it is something to be gloried in that it was so; and it would have been well had more apologies of the same sort been required. It may be noted, too, that whether or not Wiclif was in reality the inspirer of the labour rising, the odium of being the sower of strife and sedition fell on him and robbed him of his influential friends. In his own phrase, "Pilate and Herod became friends" in their denunciation of him and his works. The barons in their professed willingness to perish together in one day rather than grant "liberties and manumissions to their villeins and bond-tenants," joined hands with the hierarchy in their determination to crush out heresy. To those who then ruled England the two movements were not two, but one, and fortunately in their efforts to crush them out

together, however much misery and bloodshed they caused at the time, they could not permanently succeed.

> "For freedom's battle once begun,
> Bequeathed by bleeding sire to son,
> Though baffled oft, is ever won."

When we turn to the Peasants' War in Germany, in the time of Luther, the connection between the religious and social revolutions is at once manifest; although the great Reformer himself denounced the revolting labourers in the most violent and reckless fashion. Yet some of his champions have also sought to do for him what we have just seen some of Wiclif's trying to do for him. Although serfdom had died out in England more than a century before, it was still existing in Germany when the Reformation began. The German peasants were serfs, and throughout the Empire the relation between the masters and their labourers was as bad as it possibly could be. The German workers felt their bondage the more intolerable in presence of the freedom and independence of their Swiss neighbours. In the south-west of Germany, where this contrast was most keenly felt, the German serfs had in the years 1476, 1492, 1512, and 1513 made attempts to secure what their Swiss brethren enjoyed and it was in the same district that the great rising in 1524–1525 broke out. The Peasants' War was, therefore, no new thing. The same wrongs and the same social influences formerly at work were at work still, and bad harvests for two years in succession provided the spark for the gunpowder, which was always lying ready to

be ignited; and did so in a fashion very similar to that in which the corresponding spark was provided in the days of the Revolution in France in 1789, when French serfdom finally perished. But there were also new forces at work which must be taken into account. The fact that the insurrectionists put in the forefront the claim that they should be allowed to choose their own pastors, and that they declared their willingness to have their demands tested by the Word of God, showed clearly that they were living in a new atmosphere, and that it was the new Evangelical impulse which was filling them with new hopes and new determination.

In the Twelve Articles which these revolting serfs drew up as their programme and as embodying their demands, they set forth their beautiful and pathetic resolution to be no longer regarded "as the property of others since Christ had redeemed all alike with His blood." They had found spiritual freedom at the Cross, and in the midst of their manifold hardships and wrongs they saw clearly that freedom in the State was involved in the deliverance which Christ had wrought for them and that it ought to grow out of it. In the new light which had come to them they saw what it has taken Christendom so long to see, and what some Christians have not seen even yet, that Calvary was the birthplace of the true and enduring rights of men. They saw, too, what so many have never seen yet, that it is a mockery and an insult for men who say that Christ has redeemed them, to treat others whom they also say He has redeemed as beasts of burden, and to rob them of the birthright which their common

Lord has purchased for them with His own blood. Even as the early Jerusalem Church had all things in common in the first ardour of their love and in the new light undimmed as yet by prudential considerations, and as slavery in the Empire had become serfdom in presence of the implications of the Cross, so these humble German peasants saw the truth in its fulness and beauty in the new light which had flooded their sad and sordid lives, as only God's redeeming light can. And whenever we set aside the unjust charges made against them by prejudiced historians, we see at once how reasonable and moderate the demands of these enlightened serfs were. They demanded the abolition of forced labour, a system which was as iniquitous as it was wasteful, and the abolition of the more oppressive of their feudal taxes, which were as galling to their manhood as they were unjust to their miserable gains. To have granted these demands, however, would have meant a social revolution, and almost everywhere the nobles treated them with indignation and contempt. Unfortunately, even those nobles who were themselves in the new light could not see what it meant for the suffering peasants.*

As for Luther, his position was a very difficult one. On the one hand, he was the son of a peasant, and his great human heart was sore for those whose hard bondage seemed to be growing harder and harder every year. On the other hand, the reforming work of his life,

* The opinions entertained even among the governing classes were very varied, and many of the Imperial cities were in favour of the demands of the peasants. See Hausser, "The Period of the Reformation," vol. i. p. 129.

that which was dearer to him than life itself, might be undone in a great social upheaval. Already he was denounced from the one camp as a half-hearted reformer, disloyal at once to logic and the gospel; while on the other side there were those who were making the evangelical doctrines which he proclaimed responsible for what they thought was their vile social fruit.

Yet, admitting all this, it must be added that no course could have been sadder or more disastrous than that which he ultimately pursued. At first he tried to mediate between the contending parties; before he declared himself against them the masses counted on him as their leader, or reckoned at least on his silent approval; but latterly he turned savagely on the poor peasants who had trusted to him for help, and actually hounded on the nobles in their hellish work, although no encouragement was required. Not only did some 150,000 men perish in the atrocities, but the struggle left the wretched serfs in a worse condition than ever. They fell back in bitterness and despair, alienated for ever from the Reformation; while, at the same time, many of their oppressors went no more with the new movement. It was not the counter Reformation which stayed the onward march of the Protestant Church, and drew lines of demarcation which remain yet, so much as this fatal Peasants' War, with all its disillusionment and betrayal of the truth of Christ and of those for whom He died.* Perhaps it was beyond the

* Professor Pollard says: "It was little wonder that the organisers of the Lutheran Church afterwards found the peasants deaf to their exhortations or that Melanchthon was

wit of man at that time to find a complete solution for the labour problem as it then presented itself, but it is more than probable that if the Reformers, and especially Luther, had accepted their due share of responsibility, the most lamentable of the excesses would have been spared; the utter failure of the outbreak would have been avoided; the counter Reformation would have proved abortive; and the miserable decline of the Churches into Erastianism, formalism, and death would have been averted. Of course there was much in the rising which deserved denunciation, especially as the conflict deepened and hope fled. But when did evil laws and cowardly inaction fail to provide an evil justification for themselves? It is vain to lament now over what might have been had Luther been as resolute against the lords as he was against the bishops, unless in so far as to secure that the same great refusal and betrayal will never again be made; but to this day the Church of Christ in Europe has never again had the supreme opportunity which it then had to solve the labour problem in the spirit of the Master, and to proclaim His message of social salvation and hope to the toiling multitudes.

It may be that amid the warring voices which are advertising their wares all around in these days of Socialism some lull may ere long come in which the still small voice of Christ will be heard; and it should be the dearest desire of all who love Him that such an opportunity may never again

once constrained to admit that the people abhorred himself and his fellow-divines" ("Cambridge Modern History," vol. ii. p. 113).

be vilely cast away. To defend Luther and his fellow-workers from the charge of deserting the masses in their need is more necessary and difficult than to show that it was no blame of theirs that their disciples could not limit the good news to the realm of the soul. That the two movements were closely related is beyond doubt or discussion. Whether for weal or woe, for censure or for praise, that should not only be acknowledged but avowed. Not that they necessarily stood to each other as cause and effect. The truth rather is that both alike had their roots deep down in the past and grew out of the same new strivings and impulses which were then at work. That is not a fact for Protestants to be ashamed of, but something in which they may rather find satisfaction.*

Nor should all the emphasis be put on what the Reformation did as if it were an isolated thing. It had its roots in the mediæval Church, and that not merely in the sporadic movements which gathered round "Reformers before the Reformation," but in the best life of the Catholic Church, which was never quite bereft of witnesses to the saving, keeping grace of God. Those Protestants who find their spiritual ancestry in the schismatics and sectaries of the Middle Ages are not rising to the height of their calling. With all its faults, the

* Professor Pollard ("Cambridge Modern History," ii. 113) says of Luther that "his sympathy with the masses seems to have been limited to those occasions when he saw in them a useful weapon to hold over the heads of his enemies," and that he was not free from "the upstart's contempt for the class from which he sprang." But that is to misjudge entirely the great, warm-hearted, impulsive hero who, like the Apostle Peter and many another, had the defects of his qualities.

mediæval Church itself cherished and perpetuated many great social ideals which had more than aught else to do with the disappearance of serfdom in the fulness of time. There was, for example, the ideal of holy poverty as it was illustrated in such a life as that of St. Francis of Assisi.* There was likewise the ideal of justice as set forth in the demands of the Canonists for a fair price, honest work, and good value in trading. And there was also the ideal of brotherhood as embodied in the guilds which may have become fraternities of evil in Lord Bacon's time, but which in the earlier ages did much to make labour honourable and to set it free. The splendid and enduring work which their members did was in sharp contrast to the depreciation of labour in the ancient pagan world; and it did much to show men what it means that a man's work is his Divine "calling," the means by which he can best serve his fellows and glorify God, and that all his work may be Divine service and work for God. None of these ideals may have been universally or even widely realised in the Middle Ages. It can hardly be claimed that they are widely realised yet. But to set them forth even dimly was an incalculable service, and their place in the history of labour is a sacred one. The fruit of the consecrated toil of that far distant past which was done under their inspiration, and which has come down to us, is rightly regarded as among the most cherished treasures of our modern

* "It was indeed a divine enthusiasm for humanity which inspired the first Franciscans, who made themselves sharers in all the misery and loathsomeness of mediæval slums, if by any means they might save some" (Cunningham, "Growth of English Industry and Commerce," pp. 154–155).

heritage. Even if many who helped to rear these "ancient monuments" were serfs, they were free labourers at heart and not servile, men who worked for the unseen and eternal, the servants of the Most High.

To sum up, then: serfdom came to an end in England at a comparatively early date in spite of every interruption and every barrier put by those who were privileged monopolists in the way of the rising tide. In Germany it died out very slowly and almost imperceptibly after the great rising in the Reformation era, and may even be said to have lingered on until the end of the eighteenth century. In France some of the worst features of it only disappeared in connection with the great revolution of 1789, which made so many things new in the baptism of blood. Indeed, some of the local incidents which led to the Peasants' War in Germany were almost exactly reproduced in France in the years immediately preceding the great upheaval. The peasants were compelled in both countries to leave their own little crops wasting in the fields that they might take in the crops of their lords, or even to gather such things as nuts and wild strawberries for them. In very wantonness of power every right, legal and illegal, was enforced against them to the utmost, as if the gods had made those mad whom they were so soon to destroy. Strangely enough, in Scotland also, which had once been so far advanced under the inspiration of William Wallace, a form of serfdom survived until the closing years of the eighteenth century, even later, that is, than in France, although the last claim of serfdom actually proved in a Scottish law court dates as far back as the year

1364. There were colliers and salters who until little more than a century ago were bound, independently of any agreement to the contrary, on entering a coal or salt mine to perpetual service there.* The right to their labour passed to any new owner of the mines without any express grant. Sons had to follow the occupations of their fathers, and had to do so in the mines to which they were attached by birth. This extraordinary state of affairs, which has been traced back to an Act of Parliament which was passed in the year 1606, only came to an end in the last year of the eighteenth century; and Hugh Miller, who describes some collier women whom he had seen who were survivors of these days of belated servitude, uses terms which are almost exactly the same as those used by modern travellers to describe savages. He says they had a peculiar type of mouth by which they could be distinguished from other women. It was wide open and thick-lipped, and projected equally above and below. For serfdom, and especially serfdom out of due time, is a far-reaching thing when it lays its unclean fingers on

* "They were actually excluded from the Scotch Habeas Corpus Act of 1701, and so pitiable was their condition that in 1775 the legislature passed an Act for their relief. It was provided that colliers and salters commencing work after July 1, 1775, should not become slaves, and that those already in a state of slavery might obtain their freedom in seven years if under twenty-one years of age, in ten years if under thirty-five. But the Act practically remained a dead letter, as the slaves were rarely able to press for a decree of enfranchisement through the Sheriff's Court; so finally, in 1799, a measure was carried by which their freedom was absolutely established" (Barnett Smith, "History of the English Parliament," vol. ii. p. 345).

the soul. It shows itself even in the face, and how much more in the life! It takes generations not only to make social and legislative changes effective, but to remove the marks which never wholly disappear until the whole being has been lifted up to a higher level by a new life. Hence it is that in St. Paul's time the emphasis was laid on the power of the gospel to keep those free in spirit who were still in cruel bonds; and it is here that the unique value of the gospel emerges. It alone gives life from the dead, renews the springs of effort, and calls the lowliest to fellowship with God. In Scotland serfdom seems to have been a recognised penalty for certain crimes as a sort of alternative to the death sentence. In Covenanting times many prisoners were sent as bondmen to the East Indies, and traces of the same practice in other connections appear in ancient records. In the Charter Chest of the Athole family at Dunkeld, for example, it is narrated that on December 5, 1701, Donald MacDonald having been found deserving of death for theft, was gifted as a perpetual servant to the Earl of Tullibardine. And even Carlyle in his grim irony said that the slavery question was really one of engaging servants for life instead of by the week or the year.

THE LABOURER AS A SERVANT

CHAPTER IV

THE LABOURER AS A SERVANT

THE change by which the rural serf became the free tenant or servant came with even less observation of men than the previous changes in the uplift of labour, and is very difficult to trace. And as it was with the difference between the slave and the serf, the difference between the serf and the servant was not very great at first, and consisted more in its possibilities for the days to come than in anything actually apparent for long. Just as the lot of many a serf was harder in some respects than that of many a slave had been, there must have been many servants or free labourers whose condition in some respects was worse than that of many a serf. Their new freedom must often have seemed to consist mainly in being free to starve.* In practice serfdom had often been kindlier than it was in theory, as was frequently the case, indeed, with slavery itself. On the other hand, free labour must often have been less attractive in actual

* "*Freiheit ist keine Lösung*;" and Professor Thorold Rogers held that from 1568 to 1824 there was a conspiracy to cheat the English workman of his wages, to tie him to the soil, to deprive him of hope, and to degrade him into irremediable poverty.

realisation than it had seemed in prospect. Yet just as the serf was far in advance of the slave inasmuch as the new relation had vast possibilities bound up with it for the future of labour, so morally and socially as well as economically the difference between the serf and the servant was very great. Gurth, the serf of Cedric the Saxon preferred freedom with all its risks and privations to bondage, even with its certainties of a roof to cover him, a master to defend him, and sufficient food to eat. And even if it be true that the state of those who were emerging from serfdom must often have been bitter and infinitely sad, it is more than probable that the feudal system, with its pseudo-charity and its real oppression, which they were leaving behind owes some of its attractions to distance; and it is certain that labour made a mighty step onwards when feudalism became a thing of the past. In spite of all passionate and rhetorical declarations to the contrary the condition of the free labourer at its worst was not so bad as that of the slave. It was, indeed, infinitely better just because the labourer was now free and had become a man in a new sense.*

The economic difference between the serf and the servant was great, and there were vast possibilities for the servant which had no existence for

* I have heard of a man on trial for murder who declared that he would rather be hanged as sane than get off as insane; and although freedom must not mean freedom to starve, it is better to starve as a man than to be fed as a horse. Freedom led men into the wilderness at first rather than into the promised land, but even the wilderness is better than Egypt.

the serf. Just as the gap between the slave and the free labourer could only have been filled by the serf, that between the serf and the employee, who marks the latest if not the last stage in the evolution of labour, could only have been filled by the servant, as we are now using that term. The serf had no choice either as to the master whom he must serve or as to the sphere where he must labour; whereas the servant was free in each of these respects; free, that is, so far as the entanglement of circumstance and environment, which hampers the strongest, would allow. Not only so, but the legislative efforts which were soon made to restrict his freedom show that from the beginning of this new period in his history the labourer was making use of his liberty, and doing his best to exercise his newly-gotten and still very indefinite rights. Indeed, it is from these efforts at restriction more than in any other way that we are able now to learn what was going on in the labour world at a time when definite records are few and far between. The notorious Statute of Labourers, which followed the scarcity of workers consequent on the Black Death, applied to free labourers as well as to serfs. "Every man or woman," it ran, "of whatever condition, free or bond, and within the age of threescore years, and not having of his own whereof he may live, nor land of his own about the tilling whereof he may occupy himself, and not serving any other, shall be bound to serve the master who shall require him to do so, and shall take only the wages which were accustomed to be taken in the neighbourhood where he is bound to serve." The battle, in short, between capital and labour after the modern sort had

begun, and it began as soon as labour was able to fight or had anything to fight for. Whatever the servant got was obtained in the face of opposition, continuous and bitter. Those who were in power resorted to every device they knew, whether fair or foul, to keep those who had been subject to them so long, in subjection still. Then as always labour had to fight for every inch which was won, and had ever to live as if in an intrenched camp in a hostile land. Whenever contract, in which the workman had some measure of free choice, began to take the place of *status* where his lot in life was decided for him, and the new situation had to some extent to be recognised by the authorities, efforts began to be made and were persisted in almost to our own day to make contract as like *status* as possible. Nor was even that the worst. It was only the bad side of *status* which was to be perpetuated, and not what was good in it; such as its sense of responsibility for the sick and the aged, and its crude yet vital recognition of the solidarity of the whole nation. In other words, the masters set themselves with the active concurrence of the legislature and local authorities, and often with success, to make the servant as like the serf as possible where his duties were concerned, but not where his rights were concerned. He was to be a serf while his sphere of labour and his wages were being fixed. He was to take what he got and go where he was sent. But when times were bad or he was old or broken he might be a free labourer. He was free then to go his way.

The practical outcome of this was that while the Black Death brought the labourer more personal freedom and higher wages it deprived

him of security. The rise of the proletariat and of an unemployed class dates from that age which saw the further economic changes consequent on the growth of manufactures and the rise of capitalistic production. And so for long the freedom of the servant was often little more than a name, and was of value mainly because of what was yet to grow out of it. Its fulness and content only came as the centuries passed, and came through suffering and conflict. And as the new state of the serf, which meant an uplifting for the slave, involved more than slaves in its sweep and meant the degradation of some who were already free, so it is probable that the legislation which told of the growing power and rising demands of the liberated serfs helped to drag others who were already out of the slough down to their level. So true is it that the progress of labour has been through antagonism and with blood and tears, and that there has been many an ebbing tide as the waters have risen to high-water mark.

For some time after the ravages of the plague the condition of the labour market was altogether in favour of the labourer; and that continued to be the case while the serfs were emerging into free service after the Peasants' Revolt and obtaining a foothold on the ladder. Nor could the ill-conceived attempts of the rulers to set economic laws aside and meet the emergency by penning up the workers and stereotyping wages, wholly deprive labour of its rights and advantages. These advantages, however, did not long continue. By and by the population rose once more to its normal level, and the same economic laws which formerly had helped the

labourer now took the market out of his hands. And from that time onwards, for many a long and dreary age, the condition of the labourer as servant was often of the most miserable kind. Indeed, it is probable that the darkest chapters in the history of the labourer in these realms are not to be found in the era when he was a serf, or even when he was a slave, but in generations since then when as a free servant he had to endure all the hardships and woes of contract and had none of the benefits either of *status* or contract to brighten his lot. In earlier ages the miseries of the husbandman and the ploughman, of the weak and unprotected, had been mitigated by the peace of God granted to them through the efforts of the Church; but in these later ages they often knew little either of God's peace or the king's. For centuries after modern civilisation emerged from mediævalism the common labourer had to live in a hovel and be content with the coarsest fare, and must often have wished to fill his belly with the husks which the swine did eat. And while it is right to take long views and to point out that—taking the movement on the large scale and over a wide enough area—steady advance was undoubtedly made, that ultimately men and things must adjust themselves to economic conditions, and that progress though slow is sure, it is nowise right to slur over the pain and misery and wrong endured in the process. If sure, the progress has also been very slow.

"Yes, some may all the better be for pain and blight and fears;
But O, how many eyes there be cannot see God for tears!"

In "Barnaby Rudge" Dickens says that after the London prisons had been burned in the Gordon Riots some of the poor prisoners were found crouching beside the ruined walls lamenting the shelter they had lost. And many a servant in the long period which stretched from early in the fifteenth century till well on in the nineteenth might well have been glad to creep back again into the prisons of serfdom if he only could, and to exchange his empty freedom for something which would at least have ensured him his food and shelter. Yet all the while the deep, unceasing forces which have made for amelioration were steadily at work; the standard of living was gradually rising, and progress was being made. Sometimes the divine discontent of the labourer was both the proof and the measure of the advance which was being made. The servant was a man as the serf could not be, and a nation of serfs could never have made the commonwealth what even already a nation of free labourers have made it, in spite of all their anguish and wrongs. Theirs was the sorrow of travail, and the future too is theirs.

When we go back to the attempts at restriction which guide us to a knowledge of what was going on, we find that the century which saw serfdom dying out in England also saw the beginning of the long series of legislative enactments which restricted and interfered with labour. As early as the year 1304, when Edward I. was king, an Act was passed to prevent workmen combining to promote their common interests; the first of a long series of enactments which were only repealed in our own time. Then in 1357 a

petition was presented to Parliament complaining of "alliances and congregations of masons and carpenters" and "of oaths betwixt them made." Nearly two centuries later, in 1548, when serfdom to all intents and purposes was a thing of the past, we find an Act passed against certain "artificers, handicraftsmen, and labourers" who had "sworn mutual oaths only to do certain kinds of work, to regulate how much work they should do in a day, and what hours and times they should work." There were the usual penalties—fines, the pillory, and mutilation—provided for those who persisted in such practices, some of which have a strangely modern ring about them. Truly there is nothing new under the sun, and some who never fail to depreciate their own time in comparison with the good old days might be surprised to find that men shirked their work centuries ago, and that the "ca-canny" policy is not the novelty it has sometimes been supposed to be. It is never quite safe, however, to accept the representations of their opponents, we might almost say of their foes, as to how the workers of any age have acted; and it ought never to be forgotten that until recent times the masters have not only had the making of the laws practically in their own hands, they have also controlled the writers of history. But from the trend of this legislation we can judge of what lay behind, and conclude that on the whole a new spirit of sturdy independence was making its appearance, and that after labour ceased to be serfdom it followed a course which can still be traced. On the one side there were combinations to deprive the labourer of rights which were too new not to be grudged, and after

their wont the masters invoked and used the strong arm of the law wherever they could. On the other side there were combinations which were none the less potent, and all the more likely to be lawless that for the most part they were necessarily underground. Secret societies were no novelties in the Middle Ages, and when they got down to the democracy the workers knew well how to spread terror by means of organisations which were sometimes strong enough to paralyse the authorities and prevent the administration of such justice as the times made provision for. And of course these labour combinations were rendered all the more dangerous through being made secret.

That such a law as that of 1548, just referred to, was felt to be necessary shows that even by the middle of the sixteenth century labourers had risen to new conceptions of their rights as comparatively free, and to the possibilities of their new condition, if only they stood together in the fray. When we remember, further, that this Act brings us down to the reign of Edward VI. we may reasonably infer that these new conceptions of their rights and possibilities were not unconnected with the reformation of religion, such as it was, which had begun in the realm during the previous reign. The Church in England had lost much of her influence with the poor through her alliance with the rich and powerful after Wiclif's time; but on the other hand Wiclif's dream had now been realised in part through the spread of the English Bible among all who could read or were willing to listen while others read. Probably, too, the boldness of the labourers at this juncture was due in part to

the weakness of the central Government; to the lessening of the sense of authority alike in the Church and the State; and to the general unrest which prevailed. Many institutions which had been deemed as stable as the mountains were now in the melting-pot or altogether overthrown, and in the turmoil the workers were trying to come to their own. Inquiry was everywhere active, and active about nearly everything. Above all, thanks first to Erasmus and then to Tyndale, the New Testament was now an open book, and was telling on the life and thought of the generation as it had not told for long. The same phenomena which were witnessed after Wiclif's wandering preachers had reached the masses with the gospel were now manifesting themselves when the masses were again in touch with the gospel at first hand.

The Reformation everywhere made men responsible and free after a new fashion. Not only did it claim the right of private judgment for every man whether peasant or peer, whether layman or ecclesiastic, it put a new emphasis on the duty of private judgment as equally incumbent on all. Mr. Benjamin Kidd declares that the two doctrines which contributed most to producing the extinction of slavery, when it disappeared, were the doctrine of salvation and the doctrine of equality, and that the altruism born of these has been the force which has moved men all through the ages and taken the pith out of the opposition to movements of reform and amelioration. And these were pre-eminently the doctrines which were republished and reinforced at the time of the Reformation; and in-

evitably they soon told on the labouring class as on all other classes. Whenever men discovered that every soul could and should draw near to God for himself, the fullest freedom alike in the Church and State was involved for all; no matter how long it might be before this was realised in either sphere. Whenever they were set free from the power of the priest who had dominated them so long, every other authority was put on its trial, and had to vindicate itself before the enfranchised souls of those who had entered into liberty.

Some say, indeed, that by its gospel of individual salvation the Reformation lent the sanction of religion to the selfish creed of each for himself which was then beginning to assert itself as the dominating principle in trade, and doubtless as it developed the movement brought loss as well as gain. All the same, it is true that "our modern ideas of civil liberty are in the last resort rooted in the Reformation. From the moment when the Reformers swept away all that came between the individual soul and its Creator, asserted the full rights of the humblest human being to unrestricted communion with God through Christ, and laid upon him the burden and glory of responsibility to the Supreme for the gift of Eternal Life, from that hour political liberty became inevitable. The religious truth wrought itself out in the political and economic sphere by virtue of the unity of the soul. Religious conviction generated the spirit of Liberty." *

* See Cairns, "Christianity in the Modern World," p. 284, where he refers to Lord Acton's remarkable reinforcement of this statement, Romanist though he was.

It must be recognised, however, that in more ways than one the Reformation weakened the influence of the Church in connection with social problems generally, and in connection with the labour problem in particular. For long its influence in that realm of life was wholly indirect. Not only had she lost much of her prestige through her alliance with the capitalists; in her sadly divided state the Body of Christ had little time for such concerns as the claims and rights of the workers; and she could no longer speak with the authority before which even the mightiest in preceding ages had had to bow. Probably, however, that meant less in practice than in theory, for even in the days of her greatest power the influence of the Church in the social sphere was, as we have seen, mostly indirect. Her real work and her best had been to leaven the lump of humanity, to mitigate the sorrows of the weak and the wronged, to create new conceptions of the personality and essential dignity of man, and to give her benediction to whatever was kindly and gracious in human intercourse. And this work she continued to do in spite of all her weakness and worldliness and obsequiousness. Even when most Erastian she refused to overlook altogether the personality of the labourer. She could not in any way be loyal to the gospel and allow labour to be looked at in such an abstract way that the personality of the labourer was left out of account. Whether as sinner or saint, the lowliest was always set forth as concrete and as precious in the sight of God. But the bearing of all this on labour was seldom set forth in any official way or even with observation of men. So much was

this the case even before the Reformation that some students speak as if the Church were doing nothing, or less than nothing, during the weary ages which came after the suppression of the Lollards. Yet no conclusion could be more unfounded, and it not infrequently happens that that attack on the gospel carries its own refutation and corrective with it. Not long ago, for example, an unbelieving journal in discussing the labour problem in the fourteenth century in England bracketed the clergy with the landlords as the covetous, insolent, and tyrannical foes of the working man. Yet the very article in which this attack was made not only glorified the Christian Churchman John Ball as having most to do with the Peasants' Revolt, which was in reality successful although it seemed to fail, but showed that it was another Christian Churchman, the author of the "Complaint of Piers Ploughman," who gave the most forceful and influential expression to the popular sorrows and wrongs. Nor have such brave spokesmen for God and His poor ever been wholly awanting in our land, although in many cases their memory and their name are gone; and to miss the significance of the fact is not only to be false to historic truth, it is to throw away the one chance we have of solving our own problem in a worthy and enduring fashion.

It must be sorrowfully admitted that although even in their case there were brilliant exceptions, the great Churchmen were usually either silent regarding such matters as the rights and wrongs of serfs and free servants, or frankly on the other side. They were often worldly Sadducean ecclesiastics who were more at home in the council

chamber or even on the battlefield than in their Bibles or among the poor. But the humbler priests who lived among the people and often belonged to the people were not infrequently truly sympathetic and responsive to the cry of the needy and to the wrongs of the labourer, whether in bondage or free. It was they who kept the forces in operation which ensured the coming of the better day. The same phenomenon was witnessed among the ecclesiastics in France on the eve of the Revolution. The great dignitaries of the Church were all for the perpetuation of monopoly and privilege, but the poor priests were often with the people in their dumb yearnings after some little share of the things which make life worth living. They knew the facts of the situation, with all its misery and grinding poverty, at first hand; and it was not otherwise in the earlier and more silent revolution which made the serf a servant and prepared the servant for his coming kingdom. The fact that neither slavery nor serfdom was ever formally abolished by law in England, but simply died out, shows how gradual was the coming of the dawn and the rising of the sun, and how silent were the forces which led to the coming of the better era. It also shows how truly spiritual were the influences which ushered in the new day. There was no decree either of States-General or Czar, but the spreading of the light of the gospel of the grace of God in Christ.

It in no way diminishes the claims of Christianity, as mighty in bringing about the transition from serf to servant, that as it was in the former epochs many economic changes were taking place and many social influences were at

work which also helped to bring about the grand result. The gospel does not work apart from the ordinary life and environment of men, but through these, and God may be everywhere at work although the eyes which are holden can see Him nowhere. During the great formative fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in England, however, it must be borne in mind that while some of the economic changes were for the labourer's advantage others of them only tended to increase his misery and woes. For instance, the influences which led to arable land being turned into sheep-walks, and thereby threw many workers out of employment, were very decidedly against the labourers. This noteworthy change was probably due in the first instance to scarcity of labour, and perhaps also to the roving, not to say vagabond, habits of those who were no longer bound to the soil as serfs. They were like dogs off the chain, although, as the event was to prove, there were chains in abundance for them in the shape of cruel laws, gross and brutal class prejudices, to say nothing of the compelling pangs of hunger and the strain of natural law. The same difficulty in getting suitable labour has turned arable farms into dairy or grazing farms in our own time. Latterly, however, the preference given to sheep was due to the great advance in the value of wool, which led to sheep farming being developed on a large scale.* In the time of Henry VIII. rents were doubled because of this, and the extraordinary ferocity of the enactments then passed against vagrants is proof of how many labourers had been turned adrift, to starve if need be. Some

* See Gibbins, "English Social Reformers," pp. 31–33.

of these laws practically amounted to a re-enactment of serfdom, but no legislation could put the hands back on the dial of time for long. The suppression of the lesser monasteries, too, in the same reign added to the number of idle men; and the spirit of revolt born of the pangs of hunger found partial expression in the northern counties in the Pilgrimage of Grace.

Among the changes, economic and social, which told in favour of the labourer there are at least four which deserve to be mentioned. First of all there was the growth of the towns, the inhabitants of which had some semblance of civic liberty when there was bondage everywhere else. These towns were all along strongholds of freedom, and were antagonistic to the lawless rule of the great landowners. As early as the year 1265 towns had become so important in England that Simon de Montfort summoned representatives from the burghs to take part in what some regard as having been the first meeting of our House of Commons, the mother of Parliaments. In these growing communities there was often urgent need for workers, and many peasants were tempted by the prospect of better wages and greater liberty to betake themselves to them; and gradually with the growth of labour in the towns a new distinction arose, which still obtains, between those who were artisans or tradesmen and those who were merely agricultural labourers. It is hardly fair to think of an agricultural labourer as unskilled, but there is still a gulf fixed between him and those who have served an apprenticeship to a trade. But although this distinction was sometimes strongly emphasised, and then, as now, emphasised

by workmen against their fellow-workmen, as the standard rose for the workmen in the towns it tended to rise in the rural districts too. Not only so, but in the towns, and especially after the Crusades, settled burghal laws were gradually substituted for arbitrary violence.

Closely akin to the rise of the towns, as far as its effects on labour are concerned, was the rise and progress of international commerce. That not merely led to a new importance being put on the worker, it led to the introduction of money rents and to the payment of wages in money instead of by service or by barter; which had always tended to perpetuate serfdom. The modern crusade against what is called the Truck System was due to the recognition of how real this tendency might still be. And be it noted that in England it meant much for the labourer in the critical era that at the time when these most vital changes were taking place there was a strong central authority which was not wholly on the side of privilege. Much of the helplessness and misery of the German peasants in their time of transition was due to the absence of such a central authority in the Empire, a state of affairs which resulted in the toilers on the land being left at the mercy of the great irresponsible landowners, who were insanely jealous of any interference from without. In England, however, the Black Death which was no respecter of persons, followed by the Wars of the Roses, brought disaster and death to so many noble families that by the time of the Tudors nearly all the nobility were men who had been newly ennobled by the Crown and were therefore without the power and prestige, either as

against the monarchy or among the people, which their predecessors had enjoyed. Nothing makes for freedom for labour like the power of the Government being real for all classes alike; for that usually means that the law is known and that it is observed.

The discovery of the gold and silver mines in the new world across the seas had also a distinct bearing on the progress of the labourer in Great Britain. In England the annual value of land, which was fourpence an acre at the beginning of the sixteenth century, had risen to thirty pence an acre at its close, owing to the fall in the price of money through the influx of the precious metals. The result was that peasants whose rents had been fixed in money before 1500, in reality only paid a sixth or an eighth of the former rents a century later. That, of course, benefited those alone who had held to the land; and although agriculture was still the foremost industry, there had been a tendency to sell small holdings and either work on the land for wages or crowd into the towns for the sake of the advantages, real or imaginary, to be got there. Large farms steadily took the place of the little peasant holdings, just as during the latter half of the nineteenth century large factories took the place in Britain of the old weavers' shops where the worker often owned both his workshop and his house, the two not infrequently being one; and whatever economic gains resulted from these changes both alike meant loss as well.

And thus it was that in the midst of many subtle and far-reaching changes, the significance of which was not appreciated at the time, the English labourer moved out of mediævalism and serfdom

into the first stages of a system which in many essential respects was both sadly and happily not unlike our own. For the most part the birth of liberty has been a long-drawn agony, and already in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries we have to deplore the existence of evils which have not been altogether removed even yet, but which must be removed if the ideal is ever to be realised and the labourer is to find his true blessedness in his work and to get his rightful place in the evolution of the State. The renaissance in letters, the reformation of religion, and the new commercial system were closely associated with each other, not only in time but as springing from common sources. A new spirit of inquiry was everywhere abroad and was telling on men's thoughts and actions all round; on their thoughts about the world in which they found themselves; on their thoughts about God and their relation to Him; and on their thoughts about their rights and duties in the social and economic realm. There was a new readiness to embark on adventure in search of new worlds alike in the realm of nature and in the realms of the spirit; in morals and religion; in philosophy and science. But while religion was only one realm out of many in which the new spirit was at work, and only one of the mighty influences which were stirring men's lives, its influence was different in kind from that of any other. It went deeper down and rose higher up; and after all a man is not many but one; and when religion is truly at work in his life it must tell all round. We would fain be able to claim even more than we honestly can as due to

its healing, regenerating influence while modern Europe was taking shape, but it is something to find a writer like Lecky, who if he had prejudices was not prejudiced in favour of the Evangel, declaring that "the great characteristic of Christianity and the proof of its Divinity is that it has been the main source of the moral development of Europe,"* and we shall never get at the inwardness of the labour movement unless we see that every step forward has been a moral advance and due therefore directly or indirectly to the work of Christ and His Gospel in the hearts of men. It is not, of course, possible to trace, in order, all the different stages in the upward movement, and still less is it possible to disentangle all the forces which were at work and show at each point what the contribution of Christianity to the grand result actually was.

It is necessary, too, to bear in mind all through that if we think of the movement as a rising tide creeping surely up, if often very slowly, that there have been many ebbing waves which seemed to take the labourer far out again to the open sea of oppression and misery. But all the while, to change the figure, the leaven was working in spite of every hindrance and every reactionary influence, and the truth of God was telling in men's minds, and even more so on their hearts. From the middle of the eighteenth century, an epoch when so many conflicting and revolutionary forces were at work all over Europe as well as

* Professor Gwatkin, too, in his recent "Early Church History to A.D. 313," says that the critical study of history makes it abundantly clear that modern civilisation owes everything to Christianity.

in America, the British Legislature finally abandoned its vain attempts to compel labourers to enter into involuntary service and set itself instead to regulate and enforce contracts which had been entered into—in theory, that is, freely entered into—between masters and their servants. Various Acts of Parliament, extending from 1746 to 1823, set forth the penalties incurred by workers who failed to keep the bargains into which they had entered more or less freely and intelligently; and once again attempts to hinder fresh outgoings of the new spirit enable us to form some estimate of how that spirit was manifesting itself and stirring up the enmity and alarm of the capitalists and rulers. For unfortunately there was one grievous blot on all these laws, a blot which more than aught else is responsible for the suspicion which still lingers in the minds of many, and is not wholly without justification, that alike in legislation and administration the law has a bias, and that even in the courts of justice that bias is always on the master's side and against the servant.* Breach of contract by a servant was treated all through these years as a criminal offence, whereas breach of contract by a master was looked on as no more than a civil wrong. It is almost incredible that it was not till 1869 that

* On page 242 of his "Short History" Green tells how in connection with the application of the Statute of Labourers the ingenuity of the lawyers, who were employed as stewards of each manor, was recklessly exercised in cancelling on grounds of informality manumissions and exemptions which had passed without question, and in bringing back the villein and the serf into a bondage from which they held themselves freed.

this remnant of feudalism and barbarism was finally swept away from our Statute Book, and master and servant were at last put on the same footing before the law. Had the bias been the other way it would not have been quite so absurd, seeing that the masters had all the advantages of education and refinement and social influence, denied to the servants. But it was quite otherwise; a fact which emphasises the tenacity with which the lawmakers clung to all their privileges in the days when all legislation and all administration were vested in the landowners and capitalists.

The same bias and tenacity alone can explain the long struggle which was waged by the Legislature and the authorities against the formation of Trade Unions. As has already been pointed out, workers had discovered as early as the fourteenth century in England that there was little likelihood of their rights being recognised or of their being allowed to make any adequate use of their new freedom as the bonds of serfdom fell from their limbs, unless through combination with each other. Yet such combinations, in many ways so natural and necessary, were treated as illegal amongst the freest people in Europe until a period far less than a century ago. And as was inevitable the Unions became secret societies, which often did things truly lawless and illegal and provided that sort of justification for the harsh and stupid laws which were passed against them which such laws so seldom fail to provide for themselves. Long after the ruling classes had recognised in theory that the labourer was a citizen of the realm, with clearly defined rights which he was entitled to exercise, they persisted in treating him as a child in respect

to labour combinations, and viewed acts of his which were altogether proper and innocent as if they were treasonable and a menace to the safety of the State. Just as the serf was often looked on as if he were only a slave after all, the free labourer or servant was often treated as if he were only a serf. His chain might be longer than before, but he was still thought of as wearing a chain, and as requiring to be kept in subjection.

In the dreary and weary years of suspicion in which the eighteenth century, that era of reaction and moderatism, drew to its close, the Reign of Terror in France gave birth to another Reign of Terror on this side of the English Channel.

Fear joined hands with folly to goad on the rulers of Britain, who indeed needed little goading, to persist in their vain endeavours to prevent the combination of those who could not keep from combining even if they had wished to do so. No laws are so cruel or callous as those which are inspired by terror or panic, and in these dreadful days the Habeas Corpus Act was suspended, the right of public meeting restricted, and prosecution after prosecution was directed against the Press. In Scotland, too, where the worst effects of the terror of the rulers were seen, a band of young and ardent Whigs, whose only offence was the advocacy of parliamentary reform, were sentenced to transportation, and one brutal judge openly lamented that the practice of torture in sedition cases had fallen into disuse. In spite of the efforts of privilege and ignorance, however, the revolution took place on this side of the Channel as well as on the other, and a new era began for Britain as well for France. The period which was ushered in by

the nineteenth century, that era of revival and reform, was to be one of marvellous expansion, invention, and change; a period in which new light was to burst forth on every hand alike in science and philosophy, in politics and religion, and in connection with labour as much as anywhere. Yet for a while, and especially after the long Napoleonic wars had come to an end, there came one of the blackest periods through which labour in these kingdoms has ever had to pass.* The labourer was quite unable to adapt himself all at once to the new conditions; and he was not allowed to adapt himself as fully as he might have done. The old state of affairs with its many mitigations of a kindly sort was gone for ever, and now the gospel of *laissez faire*, the evangel according to Adam Smith, was expected to bring in the social millennium and make all things new in heaven and on earth. But all the while by means of its labour laws the State was doing its best to prevent the labourer from participating in the benefit of the vast changes which were taking place. According to the new evangel, every one was to find his own level just as water does by the operation of natural law; but all the while the water was being dammed up and artificial barriers were everywhere reared or maintained which kept the workers from their inheritance. They had lost the casual benefits of the old *régime*, where practice was

* In the seventeenth century the average daily wages of an agricultural labourer in England was 10¼d., and the average price of corn 38s. 2d. During the first sixty years of the eighteenth century the corresponding figures were 1s. and 32s. This progress, however, was not continued into the nineteenth century.

sometimes kindlier than theory, and were hindered from reaping the benefits of the new *régime*, with the result that even yet we have not wholly recovered from the infinite hurt which was then done to labour in these islands. When those in power either in the State or in industry reduce the relations of capital and labour to a kind of civil war they need hardly be surprised if a spirit of internecine strife is begotten which cannot be quickly exorcised, even when the better day has dawned.*

And it was inevitable that that better day should soon begin to break. It was not possible that a condition of things so suicidal could last long, especially among Anglo-Saxons with their genius for government, and with the spirit of the brotherhood of men spreading everywhere. New intellectual theories of social equality spread everywhere to combat the conviction of many who were good and kindly at heart, that it was only by stern adherence to the new political economy, which was more sacred to them than the

* "We may grant to the individualist that the 'letting-alone' policy would result in equilibrium of a kind. Famine, if Government does not 'interefere,' will reduce over-population; and the single spasm of acute suffering may conceivably be better than long-continued starvation. An epidemic, too, will weed out weaklings. But it is far from evident that 'natural' equilibrium will be the best possible. It may not even be tolerable. That we are one another's rivals is part of the truth, but not the whole. The other half of the truth teaches that we are members one of another. Infection may seize on the fittest: epidemic may slay or maim the healthy. It is our duty and our personal need to ask for a humanly and Christianly tolerable equilibrium" (Professor R. Mackintosh, "Christian Ethics," p. 161).

Decalogue, that every one could truly come to his own. No laws and no ignorance could permanently deprive the workers of their rights as free citizens in a land which was comparatively free and was becoming freer as the years passed by.

A decisive step forward was taken in 1824 and 1825 when all combinations of workers were declared legal which sought to settle trade affairs without any violent interference with those who refused to join them. Only such combinations as aimed at other than peaceful methods of interfering with masters in the use of their capital and in the processes of manufacture were to be deemed illegal subsequent to that date. And from the very first the results of this modified recognition of the right of combination were good. As early as 1838 a Parliamentary Committee found that there had been less direct lawlessness and reckless crime during times of strike since the Unions had been recognised. Just in proportion as the workers were allowed to act openly as well as unitedly did the old savagery disappear. Since then the progress has been steady, but not till quite recently did the law altogether cease to put a premium on discontent and lawlessness. In 1859, for example, eight miners, six of them Primitive Methodists and men of blameless lives, were sentenced to two months' imprisonment for going on strike against gross and intolerable wrongs because they had failed to give due notice. The position of affairs now is as it ought to be, that Trade Unions may act in restraint of trade so long as they do not contravene the ordinary law of the land. No agreement by two or more persons to do or procure to be done any act in contemplation

or furtherance of a trade dispute between masters and workmen is any longer indictable as an offence if such an act by one person would not be punishable as a crime. The only exceptions are in connection with such public monopolies and necessities as the supply of water or gas; and these are manifestly the exceptions which prove the rule.

During the last decade decisions were given in the law courts which rendered it doubtful whether the law was quite as far advanced as had been supposed, and also revived the bitter and injurious conviction in many minds that what is given to labour is given with a grudge, and subject to every possible discount in actual application and administration. But subsequent legislation has happily cleared away these doubts and made it perfectly clear even to the judges that nothing which would not otherwise, and in itself, be criminal can be held to be criminal when done by a combination of workers. Some have held, indeed, that the latest legislation regarding Trade Unions and trade disputes goes, wittingly or unwittingly, even further than that, and in reality puts the Unions in a position of independence of the ordinary law; but it is perfectly certain that there is nothing in the new legislation which will work out in that way. There are always plenty of barriers and restrictions to prevent the labouring classes from advancing too rapidly.

Looking back over the course of events which have led us as a nation to this happy termination of a long and bitter conflict, it may be remarked that the injustice must have been real indeed, and the case for labour strong indeed, when the work of amending the combination laws was begun by

an unreformed House of Commons; although it was reserved for enfranchised labour to complete it. As Adam Smith truly declares, in former days whenever the legislature attempted to regulate the differences between masters and servants, the masters were always its counsellors. For long centuries it was with the labour laws, as it was with the land laws, the lawmakers were those who were most deeply interested in maintaining every abuse, in preserving every privilege, and in prolonging the subjection of those who served. It seemed to them to be natural and right that things should be as they ever had been, and that the rulers should remain in the ascendant; nor is anything more cynical than the denunciation of Labour Members of Parliament as class Members, and therefore objectionable, by those who have never failed to use every iota of their power to promote their own personal ends. Indeed, it was only through a certain antagonism which grew up between the great landowners and the great capitalist employers of labour that labour came to its own in legislation as it has done in recent years. Not that there have been no other voices save those of selfishness to be heard in the long strife. Freedom has never been quite left without its witnesses, and there have always been some who rose above the prejudices of their class and sought the well-being of the State, so that the best has actually survived in the weary struggle. The servant who was once a serf has now become an employee, and is referred to in modern legislation as a workman and not as a servant, as if to remove every trace of what is servile even from the description of his relation to his employer.

The master has followed the owner into the limbo of the obsolete, and now only the employer remains in the labour realm.

A deeply interesting feature of this period, during which the servant became an employee, which ought not to be overlooked, is the importance which came to be put on the labour of women and children, and the legislation which grew out of it and its sad abuses. The growth of the factory system along with such inventions as those of Arkwright gave rise to many occupations in which physical strength was not of primary importance, and where women and children could do the work as well as men, and for far less remuneration. Under the old apprentice system, regulated by law in the time of Queen Elizabeth, masters had had an almost absolute power over the children entrusted to them, and once again customs and laws were applied to new circumstances which had never been imagined when they were first introduced, and another ebb tide swept over the land. It is one of the most pathetic features of the history of labour that every new advance for the many has meant retrogression for the few. As it was when the serfdom which lifted up the slaves dragged back some who had become free, so it was in England a century ago. Many of the children on whom the brunt thus fell by the application of laws to circumstances to which they did not properly apply, and whose conditions, worse many a time than those of negro slaves, have been set forth in "Oliver Twist" and other tales, were parish apprentices. The law at that period provided that the children of paupers—and there were extraordinary numbers in receipt of parochial

relief in these days—could be apprenticed out by the overseers, with the consent of two justices, till they were twenty-one, to such persons as were thought fitting. Manufacturers on their part were entitled to take such children as apprentices. When, therefore, the new cotton mills arose with their demand for cheap labour, this apprentice system was at hand to supply the demand, and the most inhuman practices resulted. An additional aggravation of the situation was due to the fact that before the invention of the steam engine the mills in which the children wrought were located beside rivers and streams, often in out-of-the-way places, and the bitter cry of the outraged little ones was long in reaching the ears of the public.

Writing in his diary in 1811, Sir Samuel Romilly says that it was a common practice for populous parishes in London to send children away in large numbers to the mills in Lancashire and Yorkshire, and that the children, who were sent off in wagons, were as much lost for ever to their parents as if they had been sent off to the West Indies. He adds that he knew of cases in which bankrupt employers had as many as two hundred apprentices in their service, who had just to be handed over to the nearest poorhouse when the mills stopped.* At the end of the eighteenth century tradition avers that William Pitt, in reply to a deputation of manufacturers who had come to him with the perennial cry that under the existing commercial conditions they were no longer able to compete with the foreigners, used the terrible words, so fraught with mischief and woe, "take the

* See his Memoirs, vol. ii. p. 188.

children," and, whether he said that or not,* they took them and continued to take them. As early as 1802, however, the Legislature had to intervene, and a Bill was passed "for the preservation of the health and morals of apprentices employed in cotton and other mills and factories." The immediate cause of the passing of this Bill was the fearful spread, throughout the factory district of Manchester, of epidemic disease, which made dreadful havoc among the youthful labouring population on account of their scanty mode of living and their peculiar way of working. How dreadful the condition of those little apprentice slaves was may be gathered from the fact that it was long before the provisions of this Act, such as they were, could be made operative; and that they consisted mainly in demanding that the day's work should not exceed twelve hours; that each apprentice should have two suits of clothes, one to be new each year; and that the works should be whitewashed regularly, and a sufficient number of windows provided. Nine years later, in 1811, we find Sir Robert Peel arguing in favour of this fearful system, or at any rate arguing, after the manner of such prejudiced theorists, against any interference with it. He declared that it would be highly unjust to prevent a man from taking as

* See Martensen ("Christian Ethics," vol. iii. p. 144), who probably got the story from Michelet, the French historian. While there is no record that Pitt used these words, there are terrible records in the Blue Books from 1802 till 1847 that the manufacturers acted as if he had. Many details, almost incredible now, and infinitely shameful for all who were then in power, are given by Gibbins in his "English Social Reformers."

many apprentices as he thought proper, and that it was the happiest thing possible for many of the children to be removed from their former connections.* Another speaker in the same discussion objected to the apprentice system being interfered with because that must necessarily raise the price of labour and enhance the price of cotton goods. Such utterances enable us to measure after a fashion what a century has wrought in all classes in the community. In 1816, however, we find that even the manufacturers recognised that something would have to be done, and Sir Robert Peel moved for a Committee to inquire further into the system, and said that unless the tendency of congregated labour under the factory system in large towns to give rise to perils and abuses could be corrected by decisive legislation, the great mechanical inventions which were the glory of the age would be a curse rather than a blessing to society. Following on this the years 1819, 1825, 1831, and 1833 each saw an Act passed which marked a step in advance.

The last of these four measures, which was associated with the name of Lord Ashley, afterwards the Earl of Shaftesbury, and honourably identified with many a like reform, provided for the prohibition of the employment of children under nine years of age. From nine to thirteen they were allowed to work *only* forty-eight hours a week, and from thirteen to eighteen they were *restricted* to sixty-eight hours. That hours so shameful as

* Romilly's Memoirs, vol. ii. p. 204. Nothing was done then, but four years later, in 1815, a Bill to remedy some of the abuses passed the Commons, but was thrown out by the Lords, upon what Sir Samuel Romilly described as some very absurd objections.

these for tiny infants of nine should have marked an advance is another indication of the enormity of the evil and of how far we have travelled since 1833. Provision was also made under that Act for the education of factory children and for the appointment of inspectors to see that the law was carried out in its entirety.*

Since that time many Committees have dealt with this and kindred problems, and many Acts have been passed to remove the evils under which the weakest in the nation were left to groan so long. The hours of labour for all young people and women workers have been greatly reduced; provision has been made for holidays; dangerous employments have been specially dealt with; and dangerous machinery must be securely fenced. There are now women inspectors, and provision for compensation for injuries received in the course of employment has been made. Much has also been done in connection with the various educational Acts to prevent the children being robbed of their childhood and their birthright either through the neglect and selfishness of their parents or through the greed of those who wish to exploit their labour. And for us who wish to trace these changes back to their source and to see whose hand it was which threw the healing salt into the springs, there cannot but be grateful recognition of the fact that no one did more to rouse the nation and to bring in the better day than Mrs. Browning, whose "Cry of the Children" touched so many hearts and ought never to be forgotten. It

* Since then the inspector has multiplied in the land, and it is very significant that in some occupations employers and employees agree in regarding him as the common foe.

sets the situation before us in a lurid and haunting light, and those who think it in any way over-done know little of the terrible and shameful facts :—

"Do ye hear the children weeping, O my brothers,
Ere the sorrow comes with years?
They are leaning their young heads against their mothers,
And *that* cannot stop their tears.
The young lambs are bleating in the meadows,
The young birds are chirping in the nest,
The young fawns are playing with the shadows,
The young flowers are blowing toward the west—
But the young, young children, O my brothers,
They are weeping bitterly!
They are weeping in the playtime of the others,
In the country of the free.

'For oh!' say the children, 'We are weary
And we cannot run or leap;
If we cared for any meadows, it were merely
To drop down in them and sleep.
Our knees tremble sorely in the stooping,
We fall upon our faces, trying to go;
And, underneath our heavy eyelids drooping,
The reddest flower would look as pale as snow.
For all day we drag our burden, tiring
Through the coal-dark, underground;
Or, all day, we drive the wheels of iron
In the factories, round and round.'

And well may the children weep before you!
They are weary ere they run;
They have never seen the sunshine, nor the glory
Which is brighter than the sun.
They know the grief of men, without its wisdom;
They sink in man's despair, without its calm;
Are slaves, without the liberty in Christdom,
Are martyrs, by the pang without the palm:

Are worn as if with age, yet unretrievingly
The harvest of its memories cannot reap—
Are orphans of the earthly love and heavenly,
Let them weep! let them weep!

They look up with their pale and sunken faces,
And their look is dread to see,
For they mind you of their angels in high places,
With eyes turned on Deity.
'How long'? they say, 'how long,' O cruel nation,
Will you stand, to move the world, on a child's heart,—
Stifle down with a mailed heel its palpitation,
And tread onward to your throne amid the mart?
Our blood splashes upward, O gold-heaper,
And your purple shows your path!
But the child's sob in the silence curses deeper
Than the strong man in his wrath.'"

As this poem so clearly shows, the inspiration of Mrs. Browning, like that of Lord Shaftesbury and most of their fellow-workers, was what she knew of the mind of Christ; and it is not too much to claim that it is to Him we owe all that the nineteenth century did for the little ones who were near His heart of love. And that sends us back anew to see how far the Church of Christ contributed to the progress of the labourer from the time when he passed from serfdom until he became a citizen and an employee. In these dreary ages man was eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and was discovering that there is no such thing as free education in the school of life; but if we were to judge merely from the official Church histories and biographies, even those of them which are most modern in their spirit and methods, we would be compelled to conclude that during the centuries when the labourer was work-

ing out his redemption in blood and tears the Church was hardly aware that there was a labour problem at all. It is not too much to assert that, judging from the records, she was hardly aware even that there were labourers, although the peculiar joy of the Master had been to preach the gospel to the poor; and His proud claim was that the common people heard the Word gladly. Nothing, indeed, is more remarkable in this connection than the absence of any allusions in the ecclesiastical records to the social condition of the people, throughout these five centuries of pitiful conflict and anguish. There is enough, often far more than enough, about Synods and Confessions, about Heresies and Disruptions, sometimes even about Missions and Revivals; but about the men and the women who were working out their salvation in the homes; of the miners and masons, the weavers and mechanics; there is hardly a trace. But that is not peculiar to Church histories. It is nearly, if not quite, as true of the ordinary historians, almost till our own day; although it is not, perhaps, quite so culpable with them. They tell about kings and conspiracies, about battles and treaties; but about the toiling and often suffering masses they have hardly a word to say. Nor is it a sufficient explanation of this sinister silence of the Church historians that the divisions which followed the Reformation and the counter Reformation brought pre-occupation and loss of influence. The wars and controversies of that period of reaction were certainly engrossing enough, but the labourer as such seems simply to have been forgotten; surely the most colossal oversight conceivable on the part of those whose chief endeavour

it was to vindicate their connection through the apostles, who were working men, with Christ, who was also a working man. They did not get the length of patronising the workman which some of their successors have attained. They did not even consciously ignore him. They seem simply to have forgotten that he existed.

Yet there could be no greater error than to imagine that Christianity was doing nothing for the labourer during these ages, or that the official historians tell all that was being achieved by those who were walking in the light of their Saviour Christ. The best work of all has always been done without observation of men. Christianity had done much for the labourer through the Reformation itself which made him a man in a new sense; and which had in it the promise and potency of all that has since been accomplished, and of what has still to be accomplished. It was the old story over again of the early ages, as men saw themselves and others in the new light as those for whom Christ died, and for whose salvation He yearned because they were of infinite worth in His sight. In England, it is true, and this is most significant for the right comprehension of the labour problem, the Reformation never truly reached the masses until Wesley's time; and that only then did it do for the common people what it had already done for the masses in Scotland in Knox's time. But just see what it did then, when it reached the people at last. From that time onwards the modern movement can be discerned, and there were new hopes and a new power at work in the land.

Professor Thorold Rogers has it that the influences then set in motion were the most beneficial exerted in the rural districts for several centuries. Mr. Lecky, for his part, puts it: "It is therefore, I think, peculiarly fortunate that . . . the change in the position of the labourer at the end of the eighteenth century . . . was preceded by a religious revival which opened a new spring of moral and religious energy among the poor, and at the same time gave a powerful impulse to the philanthropy of the rich." Beyond any question it was due to Christianity, as it manifested its power in the Methodist Revival, that the labourer in Great Britain gradually got, in comparatively peaceful fashion, what the labourer in France attained only through the travail of the Revolution and the horrors of the Reign of Terror. And this good work which the Gospel did for the labourer in these realms in the later part of the eighteenth century through the Methodist Revival, was more than sustained by what it did for him in the early part of the nineteenth century through the wider evangelical revival which refreshed all the Churches and gave birth to modern philanthropy and Foreign Missions. It is true that we come then to what was perhaps the blackest hour in all the history of labour in our land, a most miserable era;* but it was the hour before the dawn, and everywhere we can see the gospel doing its beneficent work at the time when the ferment and suffering

* Steam power had led to the development of machinery; workers became mere attendants; minute subdivision of labour degraded these attendants into mere machines, and the ill-omened overcrowding into great cities had begun.

which grew out of the vast industrial changes of that formative epoch were at their height.

That revival more than any other was essentially philanthropic, and it soon touched the life of the community at every point. It provided the motive power for social reform without which rhetoric, philosophy, and good intentions have all proved in vain. Into the midst of the fierce struggle which for long made for the survival, not of the fittest, but of selfishness and greed, of brutality and class pride, there came the gospel of the grace of God to lead men's minds to great thoughts and the practices of brotherhood and self-surrender. It is not possible for us to imagine how far the nation might have sunk had not the Christian religion made its power manifest, and revealed its true spirit and purpose among all ranks and classes at a time so momentous and critical.

The history of the Primitive Methodists affords one of many proofs of what the gospel did for social and labour reform in the early part of the nineteenth century. Working as they did for the most part in the rural districts, where freedom and independence in our sense were unknown, they wrought wonders.* Miners had then to toil for eighteen hours a day; and children of eight, and even six years, had to work in the pits for sixteen hours at a stretch, and both alike received only a pittance in return. The condition of the agricultural labourers was in some respects even worse. But when the gospel came to them through preachers who themselves were toilers, a great moral reformation was effected and men's

* See "The Romance of Primitive Methodism," by Joseph Ritson. 1909.

minds were diverted into the paths of constitutional reform. In villages where sheer barbarism had prevailed the whole moral and religious tone was changed, and there was intellectual stimulus as well as spiritual culture. For of necessity the gospel told all round the circle of life. Speaking of the work of the Primitive Methodists in his own district, Canon Jessopp said: "They have kept up a school of music, literature, and politics, self-supporting and unaided by dole or subsidy—above all, a school of eloquence, in which the lowliest has become familiarised with the ordinary rules of debate, and has been trained to express himself with directness, vigour, and fluency. What the Society of Jesus was among the more cultured classes in the sixteenth century, what the Friars were to the masses of the towns during the thirteenth, that the Primitive Methodists are in a fair way of becoming among the labouring classes in East Anglia in our own time."

And the bearings of this movement on the labour problem were soon manifest, whether we look at it among the potters of Staffordshire, the labourers in the east, south, and west of England, the factory workers of Lancashire and Yorkshire, or the miners of Northumberland and Durham. Mr. Thomas Burt, himself a shining instance of what Christianity may do for labour, has borne eloquent witness to the clear and decisive services rendered by Primitive Methodism to the labour movement. Along with the instinct of law and order, they instilled the love of freedom and the spirit of democratic government. From among the records in the House of Commons library Mr. Burt has disinterred the following

statement about the parish of Earsdon: "There is no mining parish within these two counties, the people of which have given so much trouble to their employers or have broken out into such violence as this. The people were under the influence of Chartist leaders, delegates from the colliers' union, and their local preachers chiefly of the Primitive Methodists." As this comes from a capitalist source we may discount the charge about violence, in return for the testimony as to where the leaders came from. It was Christ who as of yore was enabling men to stand forth to lead their fellows to obtain their just and lawful rights. Those who are depressed by the failure of Christianity in our time to solve every problem and right every wrong, here and now, should compare the appalling state of affairs which prevailed a century ago with what obtains now, and reflect what it means, that all the uplift of the nineteenth century began in a widespread religious revival. It is from the conception of personality and consequent responsibility to which Christ witnessed that the rights of man have sprung.

As the century advanced this river of life, which arose as the century began, overflowed its banks, for God fulfils Himself in many ways, and Christianity did much for labour through the movement more or less closely associated with the names of Maurice and Kingsley, of Carlyle and Ruskin. That movement arose in keen protest against the atrocities of blank individualism and a freedom which was mainly freedom to starve; and did much to inspire the efforts which resulted in delivering the child workers, and

making the mills and factories more tolerable for women workers, to say nothing of men.

These thinkers, under the leadership of Christ, made the nation see that the cash nexus alone could never bind men into a helpful or hopeful unity, and that *laissez faire* may end in the disintegration of the social order and sheer anarchy. They taught their generation that the wealth of a man consists in the number of things he loves and blesses, and by which he is loved and blessed; and although they seemed to those who were mammon-driven to be mere dreamers, that was a great germinating thought, a thought of Christ. It would not be easy to exaggerate what they did by way of saving men from the infidelity of blighted hopes and baffled yearnings. To them, more than to any others, is it due that Christianity has won so decidedly in the conflict with mere empty frèedom and the fetish of the liberty of the individual to commit suicide if he pleases; and to the Christian gospel it is entirely due that moral considerations are now so much in the forefront in all labour discussions. All that now remains to be done is to ensure that they be made supreme and all embracing. Since the days when these forerunners were as voices crying in the wilderness a new attitude to mere amelioration has sprung up, and all social questions are now resolutely looked at from an ethical viewpoint and dealt with on an ethical basis.*

* For Kingsley and Maurice, Carlyle and Ruskin in this connection, see Gibbins, "English Social Reformers," pp. 155–224. The fierceness and bitterness of the opposition offered so recently to much that is almost universally accepted now, is the measure of the progress made since then.

Even in the dark days which preceded the nineteenth century, with all its victories, the leaven of Divine truth was always at work, to some extent mitigating the severities of the lot of the labourer, stimulating intellectual activities and social yearnings, creating a purer atmosphere, and proclaiming the essential unity of the race before God in spite of all the actual disparities which prevailed. During these generations, when the still, small voice could scarcely be heard above the noises of warring men and striving theologians, the gospel gradually provided the worker with a home liker what we prize now than anything serfdom can ever have known, and brought a new tenderness into his domestic relationships. Not only was "The Cottar's Saturday Night" written prior to the revolutionary epoch, there must have been many a cottar's Saturday night before it could have been written. And just as in earlier ages a career like that of Cardinal Wolsey meant much, alike for the class from which he came and that to which he rose, so in the later era such a story as that of John Bunyan, who from being a poor tinker became a leader of men, must have done much to break down social distinctions and bring inspiration and hope. A new way, too, of speaking and thinking about the labourer gradually arose. In "Old Mortality" Scott made Claverhouse say to Morton: "There is a difference, I trust, between the blood of learned and reverend prelates and scholars, of gallant soldiers and noble gentlemen, and the red puddle that stagnates in the veins of psalm-singing mechanics, crack-brained demagogues, and sullen boors;" but no one would speak like that now. In these years, also, Christianity began to make some

provision for the education of the children of the working man, a movement which has probably not quite spent itself nor come to perfection, although education for the children of the poorest is now compulsory, universal, and free. The gospel was likewise busy preparing the workman for the place to which it was so soon to call him in the government of the nation. The value of any evolution can be ascertained only when the work has been done, and we cannot appreciate what Christianity was doing in these years, which have so few annals, except by emphasising what we find when at length the light broke. It was in the Church that the working man was taught how to rule in the State when his call came. Not a few of those who have done most for the State and for the good government of the nation, in things local and imperial alike, were trained for service in the work of organisation and in public speaking in the service of the Christian Church. Not only so, but they received vastly more than their training there. It was in the service of Christ they received their inspiration, and saw that when they went out into the wider fields of social and political service they were still in the service of Christ, if not always of His Church. Christianity is the imperial religion, and Christ makes imperial and imperious claims on all who would truly devote themselves to Him. The gospel always works from within outwards, and it has no expectation or promise of bringing the supreme blessedness to any man unless first of all it gives him its own new life. It is character, and not circumstances, which is the chief thing ; and it is only through Christ that the springs of purity, devotion, and sacrifice can be renewed either in a man or in the social order.

THE LABOURER AS AN EMPLOYEE

CHAPTER V

THE LABOURER AS AN EMPLOYEE

CHANGES in nomenclature sometimes indicate changes in outlook and temper which are too subtle to be brought out in any other way, although they may, nevertheless, be of great significance. The disappearance of the term servant from our modern Acts of Parliament is such a change, and should not be overlooked in the present discussion. Even Divine truth not only takes time to manifest its meaning and power, it reveals itself according to the ordinary laws of growth. The very success of the gospel in introducing a new tenderness into the social relationships has often been so real as to be overlooked, so truly has it been achieved without observation of men. By silent revolutions it has prevented catastrophes; and while the nation which has no annals may be happy, the lack of annals is apt to make it ignore its best friends and truest benefactors. Within recent years we have had Acts dealing with Compensation for Workmen, and in the interests of unemployed workmen; but the word servant seems to have disappeared, and its disappearance is the symbol of the disappearance of much else which should have gone ages before.

Not only so, but the French word *employé* has been adopted for British use in order to express the new relationship; while the word employer now provides a correlative as the substitute for the word master; that word also having been banished to Saturn; and in proportion as this change has been unpremeditated its significance is the greater. The dictionary authorities say that the word employee has not yet been naturalised, and that in French usage it is chiefly applied to clerks, while in English usage it is generally used to describe persons employed for wages or salary by a house of business or by the Government. But it has been in use in America at least since Thoreau's time in 1854, and it is significant that it was in America that it appeared first; since there has always been a disinclination there to use the words master and servant in connection with free labour. Doubtless that was because there, even more than here, the word servant had associations with such words of evil import as serf and servile, and might therefore be resented by a free man as descriptive of any relationship into which he could enter. Just because the word master was once used to describe the owner of slaves and to indicate absolute possession, it is ill-adapted for use where the labourer is as free as the legislature, as such, can make him. No such disability, however, attaches to the newer and imported word employer, and its correlative employee, and to use them as they are commonly used now is to do something to break the tyranny of words, to clear the air of misconception and prejudice, and to indicate a noteworthy advance in the history of labour. The Scriptural injunction

to call no man master has at length been literally obeyed, and on the widest scale, and a new relation is certainly indicated by the new name.

As is usual with a change so subtle, it came almost without comment. Yet it was the sign and seal of the advent of a new era and a new spirit; the proof that a silent revolution had been wrought; the indication that the old pagan order of things, when the few were born to rule and the many were destined to be hewers of wood and drawers of water had had its death-warrant endorsed. It had been signed centuries before by Christ on the cross. In the year 1867 an Act of Parliament was passed which is sometimes called Lord Elcho's Act, but which bears the title, The Master and Servant Act. That is to say, the old terms in use for centuries were still in use. But only eight years later, in 1875 that is, when an Act was passed to rectify certain defects which had been discovered in the earlier Act, the amending measure was called The Employers and Workmen Act. The word employee was not yet adopted, although its correlative was; but the terms master and servant had gone, and not a voice was lifted up on their behalf. Not only so, but a few weeks after the Act of 1875 was passed, Lord Beaconsfield, who was then Prime Minister, showed that he at least was alive to the significance of the change, and saw that it was far more than verbal merely; for we find him remarking that for the first time in the history of the country employers and employed were under equal laws. Whether the change was quite so great as that, effectively at least, may be questioned, but the fact remains that even then there were some who were

alive to the significance of the change which was indicated by the definite adoption and acclimatisation of the new terms. And in effect Lord Beaconsfield was right in his interpretation of the difference in terminology. The labourer was no longer a servant before the law, any more than his employer was any longer a master. Both alike were now to be viewed as citizens with equal rights and privileges. This has still to be made more explicit, but it was there implicitly then; and although much has yet to be done to fill in the content of the new relationship so happily signalised, a great step was undoubtedly taken forward when the old words of servile connotation disappeared.

All through the years which have elapsed since 1875, in spite of occasional lapses, due to judge-made law and other causes, it has been made increasingly manifest that when the labourer ceased to be a servant and became an employee, he had entered at length on his birthright as a citizen in a free land, the character in which he must now be consistently viewed. His standing before the law is no longer that of a workman, but that of a citizen; just as his employer must now stand before the law as a citizen, too. The law no longer presupposes that the labourer is more than suspect, and must prove his innocence; or acts as if its primary business were to act as whipper-in for the masters and to keep the servant in due subordination, not to say subjection. It neither interferes with his rights as a citizen nor hampers him in the exercise of them; and even the law courts have for the most part come into line with the new situation and outlook.

Before the law there are now neither employers nor employees, to say nothing of masters

and servants. There are only citizens with equal privileges and rights, as well as with equal duties, within these realms and in its government. Indeed, if this statement has in any way to be qualified, it would require, according to some, to be added that any bias there is now is against the employer and in favour of the employee since the legislation in 1906 regarding labour disputes and the rights of Trade Unions in connection therewith. That legislation, say some, more than undid the wrong which had been done to the cause of labour by the Taff Vale and other decisions. But such a feeling is probably due to the repugnance which those who have had the upper hand for long centuries cannot but feel towards perfect equality. This spirit comes out very strongly in America in all the dealings of the politicians with the negroes; and the same attitude usually prevents employers paying the full journeyman's wage to their own apprentices when their time of training is at an end. They have usually to go elsewhere first for recognition, and become literal journeymen. We are still far from a state of affairs where there is any bias in favour of the workman; and there is a great dead weight of tradition and prejudice and class pride still to be overcome before there can even be genuine equality; but the fact that such a feeling prevails in certain quarters shows how real the change in the labourer's favour has been; and that on the part of the nation and legislature there is at least an earnest desire to get rid of any bias against him which has hitherto vitiated either our legislation or our administration, local or imperial.

That the workman has now the franchise has

of course, brought about a vast difference in the modern State, even if it may not help a man very much that he has a vote if he cannot get work by means of which he may earn his daily bread. The suffrage can hardly go further down unless we adopt manhood or rather adult suffrage; and when that comes it might fairly enough be accompanied by an educational test. Now that education is free as well as compulsory, there could be no hardship in such a test; and the ignorant are always the prey of the agitator and a menace to the nation. When organised and united, the workmen of the nation now hold the fate of Governments and the destinies of rival policies in their hands; and if they were to use their newly found giant's power for their own ends, even for their own selfish ends, they would only be doing what the privileged classes who have preceded them did when they were supreme.

When household suffrage came to the labourer a well-known statesman remarked that we must educate our masters, and the need is great that when our new masters enter on their inheritance and unite to use their power in the State they be guided by Christian principles and be as eager in their loyalty to duty as in their assertion of their undoubted rights. Corruption and bribery are not less immoral or deadly, but more so, when they are on a colossal scale, and class legislation is an evil thing for the State, whatever the class may be. If those who benefit do so, not as an integral part of the nation, but simply as a class, it does not matter whether that class be poor wage-earners, great landowners, debenture holders or bloated capitalists. But it must not

be forgotten that those who express most alarm that the reign of the workmen may be one-sided are just those who in the days gone by have shown that they object to class legislation only when they are not the class who are to benefit, and whose selfish interests are to be secured. It comes with peculiarly bad grace from those who have legislated for their own class since ever there was legislation, either as landowners or as those who have reaped persistently where they never sowed, to protest that it is tyrannical and unpatriotic for the labourer, now that he is a citizen and a voter, to use his opportunity to right his wrongs and redress his grievances.

The same criticism applies to those who only fear the corrupting and demoralising influence of old-age pensions when they are proposed for working men and women who are no longer able to work and had seldom more than a pittance when they were able. It is more than strange that no such fears oppressed them when similar provision, but on a vastly larger scale, was made for retired army officials, Government servants, or aged and infirm Christian ministers. No pensions are more in demand, or more unwarrantably obtained, than those for Cabinet ministers; and yet some who enjoy such pensions, or hope to do so, speak as if five shillings a week for the aged poor means an absolute premium on vice and waste among the working classes. The truth is that the new predominant partner has as yet shown conspicuous moderation and wisdom in the giddy heights to which he has so recently been called. It cannot fairly be said that as yet the working population have made any unfair or

even unreasonable use of their growing strength. As yet they have not used their giant's strength in any tyrannous fashion.*

The truth is that there are still only too many most effective social and other checks to chasten their pride and hold their hands. The influence of religion in making for moderation and fairness cannot be exaggerated, as those know best who come most into contact with working men. And if ever a time of reckoning comes between the dominant labourer—dominant, that is, politically, but not industrially as yet—and the capitalist and employer, it ought to be clearly recognised that the great modern movement for labour reform began long before the labourer had the franchise, and was therefore not inspired by fear or due to force. Anything that has been accomplished since the labourer became so important in politics is no more than the logical outcome, the necessary sequence of what had been begun by the religious influences already at work. The same new spirit which ended in securing the vote for the worker

* Even the demands of those workmen who are supposed to represent the extremists can hardly be described as exorbitant. The Social Democratic Federation ask for a forty-eight hours week; for thirty shillings as the minimum weekly wage for all workers; for equal pay for both sexes when they do equal work; for work for the unemployed at not less than Trade Union wages; for old-age pensions and the abolition of child labour. The Independent Labour Party's variations on this are that they demand a week of forty-eight hours, with work for all at a statutory minimum wage of sixpence an hour; old-age pensions at fifty; and pensions for the sick and the disabled. They might well be astonished at the moderation of their requests, all things considered.

was already making for equality and justice in politics. It would be easier to trace back the new tenderness and sensitiveness in connection with the rights of the labourer to the evangelical revival than to the predominance of the labourer in politics. The effect may be mistaken for the cause, in this as in so much else.

In order to see how thoroughly the whole trend of recent legislation has been in favour of the workmen, and how true it is that it has grown out of this new and more gracious spirit of which the gospel is the only adequate explanation, we need only to turn to the laws dealing with the liability of employers for injuries due to accident or hurt received in the course of employment. Each new step which has been taken in the splendid succession has been more in the workman's favour than its predecessor, and still wider in its sweep. Even after the liability of the employer had been recognised in theory and principle, it was still greatly limited in practice, and indeed rendered of little worth, by the doctrine of common employment, for which, in truth, there was not a little to be said. That doctrine was that there could be no liability on the part of the employer where the person injured was himself a servant of the master involved, and was engaged in his service in a common employment with another servant whose negligence caused the accident or damage. The first inroad on this doctrine was made as recently as 1880, while in 1897 a new principle altogether was introduced. Certain employees in certain employments were given a right of compensation for injuries wholly irrespective of any considera-

tion of negligence or contributory negligence. This Act, which was still further extended in the year 1900, was confessedly tentative and partial, and many defects and ambiguities were soon revealed in it in practice and by the decision of the law courts; but some of these were dealt with and removed by the Act of 1907, which went so far as to bring seamen and domestic servants within the scope of the compensation principle.

Side by side with this, however, a system of insurance has grown up by means of which employers can know exactly what their liability will cost them, and thus any serious economic disturbance has been averted. Such legislation, indeed, is still admittedly on trial, and grave defects and drawbacks may be laid bare in it which may neutralise in part its manifest advantages; but its very existence is a convincing proof that a new force is at work in the settlement of such questions, and that a new spirit now possesses the nation in its attitude to them. The older doctrine no longer obtains that every individual must make his own bargain and must stand by himself, and take his risks along with his opportunities. The many identify themselves with the few, or even the one, and share responsibility with them; and the legislature in the name of society interferes even with adult labourers when they are not able to make a fair bargain with their employers on account of poverty or sex disabilities, and no longer on the score of age alone. It has been realised as never before that no man liveth to himself, and that no man dieth to himself. Nor has this new spirit and its fruits led as yet to that destruction of our trade and

commerce which the prophets of evil have so often predicted it would accomplish.

Indeed, that bogey about impending ruin if abuses were assailed, has been so often brought out, only to be discredited anew, that it ought to be kept in close confinement now. When the Factory Act of 1847 was passed under the inspiration of Lord Shaftesbury, or rather we should say under the inspiration of the Saviour whom he loved and served, limiting the hours of labour for women and children in factories to ten hours a day, even Sir Robert Peel was of opinion that the change would lead to less production, and by and by, to reduced wages. But the contrary soon proved to be the case. All work and no play make the labourer unproductive. The health of the workers improved under the better conditions, and with improved health there were also improved morals; the result being that the production of the ten-hours' day was as great as that of the twelve-hours' day. If only the nation does justly and loves mercy and is the true and bounteous mother of all her sons and daughters, in loyalty to the Divine law, she may safely leave her trade to take care of itself; while trade which flourishes through injustice and oppression is better to disappear. It has been found that the output per worker in cotton mills is greatest where the hours of labour are least; that is to say, it is greater in Lancashire, where there is a week of fifty-four hours, than in France with a week of sixty hours, in Germany with a week of sixty-six hours, or in the East, where the week is as much as from seventy to eighty hours. More significant still in this connection are some

statistics prepared by French sociologists in an argument for an eight-hours day. They say that the results prove that accidents in public works are reduced by more than one-third where the working day is only eight hours long. Their scientific diagrams show that from six till seven o'clock in the morning, when the workers are fresh, no accidents fall to be recorded; that from seven till eight o'clock 5 per cent. of the accidents occur; while in the hour before noon as many as 21 per cent. take place. Then in the afternoon the same phenomena are to be seen. Immediately after the dinner-hour there are very few accidents for a time, whereas 26 per cent. of the entire total fall to be recorded between five and six o'clock in the evening, in the last hour of the day that is, when the workers are tired and are lacking in interest and freshness.

The coming of the labourer to his own as citizen and employee has also been signalised by many other changes which have made for the benefit of the worker, and for the improvement of his lot, which is, however, capable of much improvement yet. In one Act after another Parliament has endeavoured to secure that workshops and factories should be made clean and healthy; that work should be done under safe and hygienic conditions; and that by the provision of fire-escapes and by the proper fencing of dangerous machinery every preventable risk should be removed. It is only fair to add that in many cases the legislature has had to protect the worker from his own rashness and folly, as well as from the selfishness and carelessness of his employer. Over against unprotected machinery has to be set the criminal use

of uncovered lights in fiery mines. For the prevention of such dangerous practices an army of inspectors of all sorts has been called into being and has been armed with all the powers necessary to secure safety and comfort, and to deal with such things as drainage, ventilation, painting, and much else in workshops and factories. In recent years special progress has been made in the appointment of women inspectors in the interests of women workers. Particular trades and industries in connection with which there are special risks have also been specially dealt with. In 1883, for instance, there was legislation regarding the peculiar position and dangers of those who work among white lead and in bakehouses. In 1895 laundries were specially dealt with, and in 1901 special provisions were enacted in connection with creameries. Laws have also been enacted which seek to prevent workers being defrauded through their wages being paid in kind and not in money, or being led into temptation through their wages being paid in public-houses. In this movement of amelioration many of the colonies have outstripped the Mother Country in the race; as was only natural, since they had no evil precedents or prejudices to handicap them. Our first attempt to prevent sweating has just been begun—January, 1910—whereas that undoubted evil has already been dealt with by law both in New Zealand and Western Australia. The age below which no young person can be employed in factories is also higher in some of the colonies than it is at home. Here the age is still as low as twelve for half-timers, whereas in New Zealand it is fourteen, and in other colonies is thirteen or fourteen. Natal

and Newfoundland, among our colonies, have neither factory nor workshop legislation, probably because they have not yet been faced with any urgent necessity for it.*

The fact that the labourer has sometimes to be protected against himself as well as from the capitalist opens up very difficult questions as to how far the State can go in interfering with the adult labourer and his work. His citizenship invests him with certain rights, and among these rights the foremost is that he should be free. But how far is he to be left free to injure himself, which ultimately means, in the social organism, to injure the community? It has been said that the most striking fact in the social history of the nineteenth century is the emergence of the individual. But long before that fateful century had come to an end the new submergence of the individual in the State had begun, and the movement which had brought the labourer all the way from *status* to contract and had taken many centuries to do so, had begun to lead him

* Nothing in modern labour legislation is more significant of the advent of a new spirit than the Trade Boards Act which received the Royal assent on October 20, 1909. It secured the official acknowledgment of both sides of the House of the principle that it is better even that a trade should cease to exist than that it should be carried on at the cost of the home life, the health, and the very existence of the worker. Put in the simplest terms, this Act secures for women workers the protection by law which men have been able to secure for themselves through their Trade Unions, and substitutes for strikes and lockouts the more reasonable and civilised methods of a Conciliation and Arbitration Board. It not only protects the workers, it protects the honourable and humane employer against his less scrupulous rival.

back to *status* once more. Indeed, it seems certain that one of the great labour problems which the twentieth century must face, and face soon, is how far the State, acting in the interests of the whole organism, may go in the direction of limiting the freedom of those who compose it. Man shall not live by bread alone, and it would be a big price to pay for better wages and shorter hours, for the right to combine and the right to rule, and all the other advantages which the new era has brought, and is yet to bring, if the labourer ceased to be really free. It is all very well to say, with Huxley, "the only freedom I care for is the freedom to do right," but what sort of right can be done if true freedom goes? It is not enough to be fed and clothed and amused. Even a benevolent despotism, with a circus attached, is still a despotism, and a man cannot realise his true being as spiritual and made for God under any despot, no matter how altruistic and kindly he may be. The whole truth is no more to be found in the new Socialism than in the old individualism. It can only be found in the gospel, applied all round in the spirit of Christ and in loyalty alike to the organism and the individual.*

When the modern interference with labour began, after it had been made fearfully and

* As the late Professor Caird has so well put it, "Society is not an aggregate of independent units, not a mere mechanical whole in which difference is suppressed, but, in the true sense of the word, an organism in which the unity of the whole is built on the relatively independent life of every part; and the independent life of every part nourishes and maintains itself through its connection with the unity of the whole body."

pathetically apparent that civil war can never be the avenue to national well-being and industrial peace, the theory was that there must be no interference with adult men, but only with children, and, in some instances, with women workers. Even those who were in sympathy with the new tendencies eagerly protested that grown men must be left to work out their own social salvation in blood and tears if need be; left to sink or swim, even if that meant sinking for very many. It was held that adult men are abundantly able to fight their own battle and to obtain full recognition of all their rights without any special help from the legislature. The truth is that at the time it was a great achievement to secure any interference even on behalf of children and women. "Freedom of contract" had become a sort of fetish, even with many who were both wise and good; and much indignation was expressed when Parliament proposed to interfere with a principle so sacrosanct. It was believed by many that such interference would reduce the whole social machinery to chaos. If a grown woman chose to enter into an agreement to work for so many hours a day for a certain wage, what right had the legislature to say that she was not free to work as long as she pleased? Or if a man was willing to hire out the labour of his children for so many hours a day for a certain payment, what right had the legislature to say that he could not do what he pleased with his own? To say that a man was not free to deal with his children as he thought best for his own interests and theirs, seemed to many to be a shocking interference with freedom

and economic law, even although the man were a cruel, drunken brute and the children barbarously ill-used. And the parents themselves protested as well as the doctrinaires.

In the Factory Commission Report of 1833 a woman is quoted as saying: "I hope the hours won't be reduced, because we have hard work to live as it is. I never beg the children off work; our earnings won't allow it." Under the influence of the evangelical revival, however, the heart of the nation began to revolt against such a state of affairs, and its intellect came to see how absurd such heroics of pedantic theorists, as well as such pleadings from down-trodden parents, alike were, although even with the revival things moved slowly for long. And it may be that some were prevented from supporting the movement on behalf of the women and the children by a just perception that such a movement could not cease with them, and that it would not long be possible to stop short of interference with the adult man worker; at any rate, where he had to do his work in circumstances of special disadvantage. And if so, their hesitation was grounded on a true insight into what must come in the end, if once the State began to interfere with the *laissez faire* principle at all.

For, to begin with, any interference with the labour of women and children of necessity interfered with the labour of the men who worked with them in the same factories and workshops. Not only so, but it could not long be concealed that the same principle which led to special dealing with women and children led also to special dealing with such workmen as miners

and seamen. For the principle really was that the State interfered not merely in the interest of the workers, but in its own interest, and when once a beginning was made in that direction rapid progress was inevitable. In four years recently no fewer than sixteen trades were scheduled by the Secretary for State as dangerous to health, and the workmen engaged in them are only allowed now to carry on their operations under very definite restrictions. The State goes even further than that now. It follows out-workers to their homes and inquires whether the work which is done there is done under conditions which might prove hurtful either to the workers themselves, to those among whom they pursue their calling, or to those for whom the work is done. Whenever the Secretary for State began to exercise the powers entrusted to him by the Act of 1891, to limit the period of employment of any class of persons in any process scheduled by his order, there passed away without any appearance of disaster, and indeed without any overt opposition, the freedom of the adult male labourer to carry on his manufactures without legislative limitation of his hours of labour.

The stern facts of the case, along with a fuller perception of the rights of the community, sufficed to sweep away the mere doctrinaire theories; and once again the predictions of disaster have gone to the limbo of forgotten and unfulfilled lore. Fortunately there are some prophecies which do not fulfil themselves.

It is generally recognised now that in any interference with labour the guiding principle is

not to be found in any consideration of the age or sex of the worker, or even of his helplessness or need, but in the wider claims and rights of the State. Even where only women and children are concerned the State has no right to interfere except in the interests of the entire community; and where these interests are at stake the State has exactly the same right to interfere, and the same duty to interfere, with the labour of grown men. No one, whether man or woman, whether old or young, has any absolute rights as against the State. *Salus populi suprema lex.* The well-being of the community is the highest law; and this is admitted now by all who are not either given over wholly to selfishness or held fast by idolatry to the fading deity of *laissez faire.*

Extreme individualism has died a natural death, and absolute freedom of contract has perished with it.* Nor is there any sphere now in which there is the old rigid submission to the formulæ which were often so glibly quoted as if they were altogether above criticism. It was that submission which made political economy the dismal science, and whatever it has become, it is no longer dismal. All thinking men would now agree with Carlyle that whatever liberty should mean it ought never to mean merely liberty to starve, and that whenever

* "The old *régime* of pure *laissez faire* has been proved impracticable. Its intellectual basis has been undermined, and many of its inevitable consequences have outraged the conscience of all civilised and Christian States, which have all, to a greater or less degree, set about the task of producing a better order by means inconsistent with its principle" (Cairns, "Christianity in the Modern World," p. 269).

it means anything like that it is no longer Divine. Not only so, but nearly everybody now admits that on the whole *laissez faire* has been a miserable failure for great masses of our fellow-men, and nowhere more so than in our own comparatively free and prosperous land.

No one now pleads that any person or class or institution can have any abstract rights as against the well-being of the nation as a whole. To set the solidarity of labour in one camp and the solidarity of capital in another is to deal a deadly blow at the solidarity of the State; and such a fact as that out of 34,000 men who offered themselves for military service during the Boer War 16,000 were rejected for physical reasons, reveals how closely some of the results of an unholy competition may bear on the very existence of the State as independent and free.

Freedom of contract is not only an empty phrase in many cases; it is often an insult and a mockery to speak of it in connection with some contracts which the State is in no way called on to vindicate. And all that can be claimed in any case is that there should be fair play, that every one should be equal before the law; and that in so far as the State allows freedom of contract for any, it should secure it for all, and must not permit any class to be specially favoured or hampered in their exercise of this right and power. The guiding principle must be expediency in its highest form, a noble opportunism which, however, is guided by principles and not by mere rules, and which seeks the highest good of all the people, with the conviction that whatever secures that is best.

And it is here that the gospel must come in, if it is to come in at all, and if the nations are not to exchange the evils and tyrannies of individualism for those of a materialistic Socialism. Nothing but love is sufficient for the infinite needs of human life, and nothing but a spirit renewed by the Divine love is sufficient for the stress and strain of the labour problem as we know it. The good in both systems is due to Christianity, and it alone can guide the open mind which is so characteristic of the present age, and apply the Divine law in a situation unparalleled in the history of the race, at once in its complexity and in its wondrous possibilities.

Whenever we seek to describe the principle on which alone the State has any right to restrict the freedom of any citizen, spiritual and responsible as every citizen is, we at once show the need for such guidance in applying it as Christianity alone can give. For that principle undoubtedly is that since society is an organic unity, it can and should interfere whenever the rights and interests of the whole are suffering at the hands of any of its component parts. Its business is to secure that no one is made an end without also being a means, nor any one a means without also being an end.

Nor does any true freedom suffer through such intervention. "The only freedom which deserves the name," as Mr. Mill truly puts it, "is that of pursuing our own good in our own way so long as we do not attempt to deprive others of theirs or impede their efforts to attain it." We are only free when we are acting in harmony with our true nature as made in the image of God; and from

that standpoint we may agree with Huxley when he declared himself ready to part with the freedom to do wrong on the cheapest terms to any one who would take it from him.

But it is obvious that the community which would interfere with any of its members along these lines, so as to do good and not evil, must be in possession of the Divine light, and must walk according to principles which can be universalised. It cannot act by mere rule of thumb. Mere casual insight and help will not long avail. Mere by-laws and regulations will soon be exhausted. Christianity alone can provide the light and power which the modern State with its magnificent ideals and yearnings requires continually. It alone can leaven the whole lump. It alone can raise the temperature and create a new spirit. It alone can replace selfishness with altruism, and lead men to look not only on their own things but also on the things of others. It alone can touch men alike as a body and as individuals, and so as to give both inspiration and power.*

It is easy enough to speak vaguely about seeking the greatest good of the greatest number, and such-like aspirations ; but that kind of copy-book head-line wisdom does not carry us very far. As George Eliot has it, emotion is obstinately irrational and absolutely refuses to adopt the quantitative view of human anguish, or to admit that thirteen happy lives are a set-off against twelve miserable lives, which leaves a clear balance

* "If co-operation is to succeed as a practical application of Christianity to business, there must be breathed into it a spirit of Christian consecration" (Professor Eli, "The Labour Movement in America," p. 201).

on the side of satisfaction. Arithmetical solutions are of no avail, and there never was such need for the light of the gospel in legislation and administration as there is now, when political economy is at a discount, and we have embarked on the troubled and unknown waters of expediency.

There may be nothing nobler than a true expediency, a Christian opportunism; but there may be nothing meaner or pettier than an expediency or opportunism without the Divine light. Nor, as a matter of fact, has Christianity been idle or inoperative during these years in which the labourer has been coming to his own as employee and citizen. Amid much weakness and inconsistency, for which generous hearts always make allowance, as for the personal equation in astronomy, it has been proclaiming its Divine message more clearly and fully than ever before, and its message has been applied with unwonted resolution to the new problems which have to be faced.

And it is no wonder if those who have the spirit of Christ have felt the lure of the new era, since it is to Him we owe everything which makes the era new and hopeful. It is not enough to say that true Christianity is never critical merely to any movement for amelioration, but always sympathetic. It is the direct or indirect source and inspirer of every such movement, and its principles are applied and its laws enunciated even by those who are not themselves believers in Christ.

They have sometimes done this in unworthy ways, as when they have set up other systems as rivals to the gospel on the strength of principles

which were wholly due to the teaching and spirit of Christ. But even when the gospel is attacked by those who wear the borrowed robes of Christian truth, believers can rejoice that even so the gospel is preached. Even when Christ is preached in envy we rejoice that He is being made known to men. For it is under the influence of Christian truth directly and indirectly applied that the old deplorable caste lines and the former limitations of paganism and feudalism have so largely disappeared in presence of a new recognition of what it means that the Lord Jesus was and is a man, and that He invites all men to be His disciples.

It is said that a great lady once demanded of a preacher whether he actually taught that she must be saved in the same way as her footman ; and it is on record that a French Marquise of the *ancien régime* remarked of some one in the circle she honoured with her presence, that God would think twice before He condemned a man of his rank. The Duchess of Buckingham, too, in Whitefield's time, denounced the Countess of Huntingdon for asking her to go to hear the preacher. His doctrine, she said, was most repulsive, as tending to level all ranks and do away with all distinctions. "It is monstrous to be told that you have a heart as sinful as the common wretches that crawl on the earth; and I cannot but wonder that your ladyship should relish any sentiments so much at variance with high rank and good breeding."

This spirit was begotten of the days when the labourer was a serf, and did much to prolong these days, just as it did much to bring about the French Revolution ; and it has died out just in proportion

as Christian truth has been understood and applied to it. No matter how long men have taken to see it, the brotherhood of men is the necessary result of the Fatherhood of God as revealed in the gospel and embodied in the entire Christian Revelation. The Incarnation was a prophecy of what man may become: the embodiment of the Divine conception of man; and the leaven of Christianity takes time to work. Even yet the Church and the world are only beginning to understand what the Christian religion really is.*

One of the chief forces which Christianity has had to combat in bringing in this better day has been the influence of the ordinary political economy which gathers round the name and teaching of Adam Smith. The theory of trading and trade of this school, with all its conspicuous merits, has been purely individualistic; perhaps necessarily so. It simply ignored moral considerations, as was perhaps inevitable, although trade, like all else in human life, rests on the moral; † but it is the primary business of the gospel to invade every department and to see that moral considerations are everywhere supreme, even in commerce and trade.

Some Socialists who resent the religious question

* Yet "the trend of evolution has been towards what appears to us as good. Unceasing war has beaten into actuality relative peace. From strife to conscious strife, from conscious strife to comparative tranquillity, and from comparative tranquillity to ideals of human brotherhood and universal love" (J. B. Hunt, "Existence after Death Implied by Science," p. 334).

† "We must moralise our social relations as they stand and every other reform will come as a thing of course" (Professor Jones, "The Working Faith of the Social Reformer," p. 114).

being raised at all are fond of saying that you may as well try to speak of Christian astronomy as of Christian Socialism, and that Socialism is a political economy and not a religion. But men are not so built as to allow of such lines being drawn. A man, whether for evil or good, is not many, but one. The political economy which postures as non-moral or non-religious will probably end in being immoral and irreligious. And when Socialists argue that Socialism has no more to do with religion than with astronomy, they are either playing with words or ignoring the biggest facts of history and life.* And in many instances that was the fate of the older system now nearly extinct.

To make self-interest the ruling principle, and to look for the common prosperity to come through common selfishness, tended to reduce the social order and the relations of employer and employed to being a species of civil war. To teach that the nexus of cash payments alone can bind men into a fruitful or helpful unity, or to think and speak of physical labour in such a way as to betray the conception that the labourer can hardly be expected to find pleasure and satisfaction in his work, and should therefore work as little as he can, is to bring back the old paganism under the thin veneer of a new philosophy. To rob labour of its

* *Cf.* Mr. Ramsay Macdonald, "Socialism," p. 101: "Socialism has no more to do with a man's religion than it has to do with the colour of his hair. Socialism deals with secular things, not with ultimate beliefs." Or Mr. Keir Hardie, "From Serfdom to Socialism," p. 36: "It cannot be too emphatically stated that Socialism takes no more cognisance of the religious opinions of its adherents than does either Liberalism or Conservatism."

essential and inherent dignity, or to view the labourer as an impersonal labour-power with a number and not a name, as a hand and not a soul, something to be replaced by another similar instrument whenever he is incapacitated or worn out, is to remove every hope of genuine improvement and to prepare the way for the disintegration of society and sheer anarchy. To exalt freedom of contract as some have done until it is the supreme principle, the quintessence of all wisdom, is not merely to reduce the State to the office of a night-watchman, as Lassalle put it, it is to go in the face of the most obvious necessities of our daily life and the most elementary Christian principles.

And Christianity has not only taken up the challenge; we may fairly claim, the economists themselves being witnesses, that she has won in the first encounter in the great conflict. Men no longer bow as they once did before the orthodox Dagon; and the Pan-Anglican Conference had purified public opinion behind it when it declared that "property is not so much a possession for an individual as a trust for a community"; "that the forces of competition must be restrained by the forces of brotherhood."

The late Professor Green of Oxford taught that the "progress of mankind is a progress of personal character and to personal character," and from this viewpoint the progress which the labourer has already made under the leadership of Christ is very marked. All through the era when he was a servant he was steadily becoming a stronger and braver man, and this advance has been still more marked since that era was left behind.

New responsibilities have developed the new powers necessary to meet them. "The real smart is the soul's pain and stigma, the hurt inflicted on the moral self," said Carlyle, and the converse of that proposition is also true.

The only progress which really counts is that of the moral self. The recognition of new rights gives birth to new conceptions of duty, for there can be no right without its corresponding duty; and personal character has grown as new depths were fathomed and unwonted summits scaled. The advancement of the labourer may be measured by his growth in the sense of personal responsibility to God, and beyond any question nothing has done so much to deepen that great sense which ennobles and enlarges as Christianity has done.

The gospel comes to men with its summons to personal decision and personal service, and with its emphasis on the infinite issues which here and now gather round every human soul; and it has been the salt of the earth, the light of men. That this claim is in no way the outcome of mere prejudice is amply borne out by the specific charge already alluded to, that the gospel of the grace of God has filled the down-trodden workers with such hopes for the life to come that it has made them culpably careless about the wrongs and injustices of the life which now is, with its manifold duties and appeals.

Unfortunately that charge is so ridiculous that the friends of the gospel cannot but wish there was more foundation for it; but those who make it can hardly allege at the same time that Christianity has not been influential in lifting up the labourer, or that it may now be treated as effete.

As it is we can only rejoice in the testimony, perverse though it be, that God's good news has brought joy into sorrowful and stricken lives; that it has made heavy burdens light; and has inspired the weary toilers with hopes which make all things new. As a matter of fact, and on no foundation of ill-informed criticism, it has not only done that; it has made men quick to discern their rights and brave to defend them.

It is notorious, for example, that the effect of Christianity alike on the Puritans of England and on the Covenanters of Scotland was the very reverse of what is alleged in the insinuation just referred to. When it set men free in their souls, it made them eager for corresponding freedom in the State. It was not seemly that those whom God had redeemed should be deprived of their civil rights. A new passion for justice filled the men of the second Reformation as it filled the hearts of the awakening peasants in the first. Mr. Green says that "the whole history of English progress since the Restoration, on its moral and spiritual side, has been the history of Puritanism," * and no one can say that the Puritans unduly acquiesced in wrongs in this life because of the hope which filled them for the life to come. Not only were they filled with the yearning to be free all round, they were made fit to be free; and obtained the new power which made them strong to follow up their demands by brave and resolute deeds.

It is the glory of the gospel that it makes men fit for self-government, and in all history there is no instance of a people making permanent

* "Short History of the English People," p. 586.

progress in character apart from its teaching and inspiration. Christ alone can ensure the growth of personality along moral and spiritual lines in likeness to Himself. "I am among you as one that serves," is His message to the labouring man, and in that message there lies the secret of the power which moralises the worker and his work. But just because it is spiritual, Christianity must have time to exert its influence and do its work. Wondrous as its fruits have been, it can never work by magic, but only through the renewed soul. It does not come, therefore, with observation of men, as we have already noted in every era in the progress already made.

The history of labour emphasises the need for patience on the part of those who are yearning for something vastly better than anything which has been attained as yet; even as it suggests the infinite patience of God amid all the stubbornness of men and their inhumanity to each other. History is the living garment of God, and He has been making the meaning of the gospel more and more manifest as the ages have rolled past.

The anti-slavery movement with which the nineteenth century began arose out of a truer appreciation of the mind of Christ; and John Stuart Mill, no prejudiced critic, declared that the action of Great Britain, in paying twenty million pounds that her slaves in the West Indies should be free, was the most definitely righteous act ever done by a nation. But that same anti-slavery movement is an object-lesson in the slowness with which even good men and true see the logical, or better, the spiritual issues of their faith. In the light of the evangelical Revival our fathers saw

clearly enough that it was as sinful to enslave black men as to enslave white men; but obvious as that seems to us now, it took many a long while to see it even in the fuller light.

In his autobiography, published in 1904, the late Mr. Moncure D. Conway tells how he was brought up in a truly godly Methodist home in Virginia, where slaves were kept as a matter of course. They were well treated and the word "slave" was not used. But although the blacks were spoken of as servants, or simply as negroes, they were indubitably slaves. His cousin, who was the editor and owner of the most influential paper in the South, harmonised slavery with the most radical democratic equality by the theory that Africans were not strictly human beings! Mr. Conway's mother had to cease giving lessons in the Christian faith to the children of their slaves along with her own children, because it was rumoured that she was teaching them to read, which would have been illegal. Mr. Conway himself at one stage in his development held that the negro was not a man within the meaning of the Declaration of Independence.

So slow, if also so sure, is the progress of moral causes and spiritual conceptions; but whenever the Christian community came to see what the gospel meant and involved, abolition soon followed. Obedience is the pathway to revelation and the fruit of revelation, and abolition and revival went hand in hand in the days of quickened consciences and opening eyes.

Nor has the experience of the Church in this respect been unique. One sphere after another in the national life has been claimed for the

kingdom of God, alike in public and in private, and ultimately the claim is always admitted, the admission often coming with a rush in the end as the nation is born in a day. It seems to be certain that as the logic of the gospel is fully recognised, nothing whatever will be allowed to remain outside the reach of the Spirit of Christ or hid from the light of His law.

With all our faults as a people, it is probable that the conscience of the nation was never more tender in regard to public duty than it is now, and even as Christianity has created this new conscience, it alone can guide it in its work. The State now takes the duty on itself of caring for the poor, and securing the education of the young; but the Church did these things first, and it was she who showed the way. Nor is anything more remarkable in modern times than the fashion in which the older conventions and prejudices about State interference and the limitations of its duties and powers have been put to flight, and not least so in connection with labour.

And while much has yet to be done before the millennium comes, what has been already done is the surest guarantee of ultimate victory over selfishness and sloth, over prejudice and greed. Good men no longer divide their lives into secular and sacred, as concert programmes are sometimes divided, as with a hatchet; and almost everywhere the claims of Christ are recognised as imperial and all-embracing, even by those who as yet set them at naught in practice.

It would be a serious blunder, however, to imagine that our labour troubles as a nation are practically at an end, or that nothing but good

has come to the labourer through the advent of this new era in which he is an employee and a citizen. As a matter of fact, it has brought its own evils with it, and has accentuated others which were already in existence.

It would appear that no advance is unalloyed gain, and not only is the new relationship not wholly gain, the very freedom which it has brought has rendered some of its drawbacks and limitations all the more intolerable. The personal tie, for example, which often existed between the master and the servant has been almost lost as between the employer and the employee; and the new anonymity of the worker may outrage his personality in a fashion impossible before, and inflict the supreme wrong.

In the huge factory which the era of machinery has inflicted on us, and under the great limited liability company or syndicate, the worker is only a hand, and has only a number and no longer a name. There is also his anonymity at times in the far-reaching Trade Union, where, again, he may be only an insignificant item to be swept on helplessly to share in much of which he does not approve. In proportion, too, as he is lifted up as free and responsible the worker becomes aware after a new sort that there is caste in Britain as well as in India, and that very many of the so-called "better classes" look down on the working man, and that both in the Church and in the State.

The truth is that this era of machinery, the full significance of which is so seldom realised,*

* The problem of the extension of the use of machinery and the consequent displacement of workers is one which

and of great combinations of capitalists, has dangers all its own; while many of the kindlier features of the *ancien régime*, with all their mollifying influences, are no longer operative. The evils of overcrowding due to excessive centralisation, for instance, are very great, alike as regards health and morals, and they are practically new. Nor can we dare to hope that we have seen the last or the worst of that feature of modern industrialism.

The whole tendency is in the other direction and towards the accentuation of the disastrous consequences of herding the multitudes into overgrown cities. The serf was bound to his work, and so is the modern employee, only he has often to follow his work, so that local ties, and even family ties, are hopelessly severed and he is lost in the crowd. So much is this the case that the old Scottish system of taking houses for a year at a time is now felt to be an undoubted grievance, and has been recognised as such by a Parliamentary Committee on the subject and by abortive attempts at legislation.

The fearful monotony of the labour of the employee, too, with its minute subdivision, also tends to assail his moral life in the most disastrous way, and is probably responsible for much of the hard drinking which still brings so much degradation and woe and only makes matters worse. If Emerson's wail about the bitter fruits

is ever becoming more serious, and yet it is strangely overlooked by most. It is hardly referred to in the conflicts between Free Traders and Tariff Reformers as a menace, or even as a partial menace. Yet in almost every trade machinery now does what was once done by men and women, and the end is not yet.

of the division of labour were justified in his time, it is vastly more called for now.*

Besides all this, the waste of the present system is enormous. Its wreckage is on every sea. Its flotsam and jetsam meet us wherever we turn. It is not enough to show by statistics that the wealth of the nation is shared in by a larger number of persons than ever before, although it would be churlish to forget that fact, or to ignore its message of hope. Nor is it enough to show that the standard of living has risen so that what used to satisfy the servant does not satisfy the employee, although we may well rejoice that that also is beyond question true.

The portentous fact remains and cannot be gainsaid that somehow or other in this land of ours, with all its wealth and its sybarite waste and self-indulgence, there is a great army of decent men and women who are always on the verge of hunger, it may be on the verge of revolution, and that the wounded and dead in our industrial conflict in this Christian land are a great host.†

Not long ago—at the end of the year 1907—Lord Cromer was pointing out to a Scottish

* And as Dr. Forsyth remarks when speaking of the lack of security and fixity of tenure in connection with modern labour : "No wonder if the frequent effect is either stupidity or levity."

† "We see that the average wage has risen, but also that it now amounts to but £45 per annum. We see that prices have fallen, but remember that in 1905 one-third of our population, in spite of lower prices, have not sufficient means to command a proper supply of the common necessaries of existence" (Mr. Chiozza Money, quoted by Miss Stoddart, "The New Socialism," p. 35).

audience that a labourer now gets about 65 per cent., a factory operative 75 per cent., and a skilled mechanic 90 per cent. more of the necessaries of life than he did fifty years ago. But about the same time statistics were published which showed that in the city of Dundee the average weight of boys of thirteen in the schools in the poorer districts was about 9 lbs. less than Mr. Francis Galton's averages; and that the average weight of the girls of twelve was more than 9 lbs. less than the average weight of the girls in a secondary school in the same city. Nor is it many years since it was reported that of all the children who die in the City of Glasgow before they complete their fifth year, 32 per cent. die in houses of one apartment, and not 2 per cent. in houses of five apartments and upwards.

It is more than likely that the great industrial and trading combinations which are such a feature of our time will by and by tend to mitigate the severities of suicidal competition and open up the way to a better time when the evils of combination and competition will both be transcended. They may also give the State lessons in combination for the benefit of the many and not of the few, and thus guide the nation to a noble collectivism.

But meanwhile the evils both of the combination and the competition are with us, and that without the mitigations of earlier days when master and man met face to face and had more in common than they seem to have now. And all this is telling adversely on that progress in personal character which is the ideal and goal. The absence of personal relations in modern industry

makes the conditions under which many must dispose of their labour all the more demoralising. The personality of the worker, as well as the personality of the employer, which is the most sacred thing either has, cannot but suffer sadly under present conditions.

Those who know the problem at first hand are well aware that that is where the iron enters the soul, and that the real hurt is the hurt to the moral self. Under the old status of feudalism there was often a saving sense that master and servant, even when the latter was little more than a serf, were held together by mutual interests and mutual dangers, and this sense of community of interests and of fellowship often lifted the drudge out of his low estate and made him a man. Even as a serf he was an integral part of the whole, and he knew that he would be missed when he was gone.

In the new status, however, we have for the most part instead of that a rankling sense of antagonism, and a bitter feeling that the death of a horse would be more lamented than the death of a worker who is only a hand to be easily replaced by another hand. Capital is supposed to gain whatever labour loses, while labour expects nothing which it cannot extort and hold by the strong hand. On this battlefield, too, it is often apparent that there is no Society of the Red Cross to care for the stricken.

On both sides there is frequently a sad want of considerateness, on the understanding that all is thought to be fair in hate and war. When work is plentiful the employee absents himself without concern as to the trouble and loss he is

causing. When work is scarce the employee is turned adrift with equal callousness. I have known of workmen paid off in batches one day for want of material and taken on again the next day when the material had come forward; and certainly if nothing else suffers in such a transaction, the self-respect of the labourer as well as his personality must. Any thought that he and his employer have genuine interests in common must also suffer.

In the new industrial era, too, there is far less fixity of tenure in many trades than there once was; and every fluctuation of the money market, to say nothing of the operations of Corners and Trusts, working as ruthlessly as pirates used to work, sends crowds of workers adrift.

The modern limited liability company has no personality, but only a registered office, and it can seldom afford to keep a conscience. Its directors have the need for paying a dividend and of facing the shareholders ever before their eyes. Nor do they come into contact with their workers as employers did under less complex conditions. Everything is done through paid officials, who are not free to listen to the appeals of sentiment, and are often not free to listen to the demands of justice. Foremen, too, in such concerns are sadly handicapped when they require to stand like buffers between the two opposing and hostile forces.

Like taxation and representation, responsibility and power should go hand in hand, and that seems to be seldom possible where great masses of workers are employed. The result of this uncertainty and unsettlement may be estimated

by the number of well-paid tradesmen who are ready to sacrifice part of their wages for any employment where they may reasonably expect to be kept on as long as they are able to work and perhaps as long as they live. It is some sort of fixity of tenure which the best workers crave after, and yet meanwhile there is less of it than ever there was.

This is specially true of those who are called casual labourers. They live from hand to mouth and often hardly know how they live. They are paid by the hour and engaged by the hour, and just because they are never sure of two days' work in succession they never save anything; they have seldom anything to save.

But even in the grade above this, among the artisans, there is also much insecurity. This reaches its climax among those who are in the building trades; but in almost every trade there are many workers who, even when trade is fairly good, are not sure of a week's work at a time. The removal of this difficulty would do more than aught else to beget a spirit of conciliation among the labouring classes, and pave the way to an enduring peace.

And this is a moral as well as an industrial question. The light of the gospel must shine on the troubled waters before the storm can cease, and unless those who name Christ's name let it shine all round they are no better than empty cisterns and broken reeds.

The bearing of the new industrial era on the training of the young, and on the whole question of apprenticeships, is also very far-reaching. In many of the largest public works, such as sewing-

machine and chair factories, apprentices are now practically unknown. Division of labour has been carried so far that apprentices are no longer required, since no one learns a trade; there are no trades to learn.

But where there are no apprentices there are no journeymen, no skilled artisans, that is; and the moral results of the change are even more important than the economic, important as these are. When bad trade comes to their own branch of work such workers are helpless, as tradesmen of the right sort seldom were; and besides that, there is the subtle loss of the self-respect which added a cubit to the stature of the man who knew his trade and could work anywhere. And so another blow is struck at the growth of that moral personality which is at the foundation of all true progress and reform, and of a true national life.

The loss to the lads of any systematic training during their making and marring time is also a very serious matter for the nation. The change means likewise that lads and young girls are able to earn as much as grown men or women do, with disastrous effects on many a home. Many drift out of their homes into lodgings and into early marriages in the most hurtful fashion. Yet the laudable attempts which are being put forth to increase the number of those who learn trades are not likely to be successful so long as the bulk of those who are without trades in the ordinary sense get work as easily as those who have them. The gain at present is only unquestionable for those who acquire such technical knowledge in addition to their workshop training

as fits them for becoming managers or even inventors in the days to come.

The era of the employer, then, while marking great and definite advances on the preceding stages in the labourer's progress from slavery to perfect freedom and manhood, is still far from realising the Christian ideal, and the call is still urgent that the Church of Christ should apply the principles of the gospel to the new relationship, as these principles were so fruitfully applied to the relationships which preceded it. The Church of Christ must set itself in every way it can to end the class war. In the Middle Ages men spoke of God's Peace and the King's Peace. Let us in these days have the Peace of God once more, and in fuller form, for it alone is twice blessed. Instead of the ill-omened alliance between the altar and the safe, let us return to the older and better alliance between the altar and the hearth, and through labour claim the home for God. When Christ came at first He found the Church steeped in institutionalism and traditionalism, and He refounded it upon working people, and there is no other way in which His kingdom can come in our time.

The Church of God is far more than an organisation for achieving social reform. It can only do that if it does vastly more. The Jacob's ladder which it sets up on the earth must not only rest on the earth and deal with the everyday life and troubles of mankind, it must enter the eternal and unseen, or its work will be altogether barren. At the bottom of the world's bitter cup of woe lie the bitter dregs of sin; and Christians have always done most for the social amelioration of

the oppressed and downtrodden when they were loyal to the evangelical impulse in its most imperative and immediate form.

Social amelioration is not something which grows out of the gospel, it is the gospel itself in its concrete application. It is not true that by such precepts as "Resist not evil," and its teaching, "The poor ye have always with you" Christianity has helped to hinder social reform and keep down the workers. It has been the best friend the worker has ever had, and all social reform has grown out of it. To establish right relations between God and men has always been the royal road to right relations between man and man.

Yet if the Church of Christ is to be in perfect sympathy with her Lord, and is to take away the stone which keeps multitudes in the tomb of hostility and indifference to Divine purity and truth, she must have the urgency of social reform ever on her heart and conscience; and the widespread conviction that this has not always been the case, as it ought to have been, has much to do with the widespread indifference of working men to the Church. As long as it is even approximately true that Christians are no better than others in their treatment of their workers, and that the Priest and Levite go past on the other side when they see men and women stricken by the robberies of capitalism and pagan competition, so long will the workers be conspicuous by their absence from the sanctuary.*

* "The right comprehension of the Christian life and of the spirit and tendency of Christian history should show that the Church should use its influence against the continuance

Whenever the end of the ladder which rests on the solid earth has been neglected, and the Church has forgotten those among whom her Master found His trophies and His friends, the work of the Church becomes intangible and tends to vanish into thin air. The ladder may be lost in the clouds, but no angels of God ascend or descend.

The great salvation is an all-round salvation. Those who follow Christ are called to leaven the whole lump. They are to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth; and the Christians of the twentieth century must face the problems with which it has come, in the power and spirit of their Lord, and with both knowledge and zeal. Neither God nor man requires ignorance for his service. Neither God nor man can bear those who are lukewarm. Our readiness to apply the gospel will be the measure of our testimony to what it has done for us, and our gratitude for God's greatest gift.

One of the gravest features of the present situation, as we have seen, is the manner in which modern conditions press on the personality of the labourer, and tend to make him feel increasingly that he is of no account; that he is only a nameless item, a numbered hand, to be replaced by another item or hand equally anonymous when he is no longer deemed fit for work. No burden on a man's spirit could be greater than that, and

of the struggle for existence in the competitive system, and in favour of the less fortunate, who in the course of that struggle have been driven to precarious wage-labour as their only means of livelihood" (Kirkup, "A History of Socialism," page 268).

only Christ can provide the true corrective for it. No one who accepts God's good news can feel that he is lost in the crowd. He knows that he is a priceless soul for whom Christ died, and that he has been reconciled to the Father by the work of the Holy Ghost.

Through the life of the Christian home, too, the gospel can strengthen and deepen the personality which is crushed elsewhere among the jagged wheels, and whatever makes for the well-being of the home ought to be encouraged, just as everything which tends to belittle it or rob it of its influence should be resolutely opposed. To honour and redeem men is a Christian duty, and the Christian patriot has a great field for service set before him in solving every evil problem from the stronghold of the Christian home. In its purity, unselfishness, and worship it should for ever be showing forth in miniature what the State ought to be; and it should continually proclaim through its own triumphs that the secret of all power is in Him who calls those who are weary and heavy laden to Him that He may give them rest.

In the ideal Platonic State the home had to be eliminated as a citadel of selfishness, but in the ideal State of Christ the home is the spring from which the healing waters flow, and is the type of what the State itself should be, as each looks not on his own things alone but also on the things of others, as the Master Himself did.

THE CHRISTIAN IDEAL

CHAPTER VI

THE CHRISTIAN IDEAL

SLOWLY but surely the tide has risen and the condition of the labourer has improved as the slave became a serf; the serf a servant; and, in our land at least, the servant an employee and a citizen of an Empire on which the sun never sets. Not only so, but when they are organised and united the labourers are now the predominant partner in the Empire, and can enforce their demands. Yet much as has been achieved, and although nineteen Christian centuries have come and gone since our Lord came to begin the solution of every moral problem, the labour problem is as acute as ever.

That is partly due, of course, to the advance which has been made, and to the way in which the whole outlook of the labourer on life has been changed for the better; and it would be to condemn ourselves to despair to deny that the standard of living has been raised, or that very definite progress has been made.* But the fact

* It has been calculated that whereas in 1839 a carpenter whose wages were 24s. a week required 24s. 10d. for the ordinary necessaries of life, in 1875 a carpenter whose wages were 35s. a week only required 29s. 1d. for the same requirements; and there is no reason to doubt that this improvement has been maintained since then.

remains that while the situation is hopeful after a new sort and the problem has changed its form, the need for some other solution than we have yet attained is as urgent as ever. The entire situation, indeed, is full of danger as well as of hope, and there are possibilities of disaster as well as of final victory in it unless the solution is found soon.

If we include the unskilled as well as the skilled labourer in our purview, as we must, alike as Christians and economists, we find the worker as much in the rear, relatively to the rest of the community, as he was before the modern movement began. The lot of vast numbers, especially among those whose work is casual, a class which is constantly increasing owing to the enormous development of machinery and the centralisation of industries, is still very miserable and full of danger for the Commonwealth.

It is hardly possible to estimate the number of those who may still be described in the words of Lowell as "low-browed, stunted, haggard men," and it is impossible to exaggerate what the existence of such a class may mean for the nation in these days of social upheaval. In many respects their condition is not essentially different from that of the slaves who toiled in the factories and fields throughout the Empire when our Lord was here among men.* They are almost as

* Even individualists are aware of the serious condition of things in this respect. "I am no more content than are the Socialists with things as they are, and I most earnestly desire that they should be made better, and would gladly consent to any and every pecuniary sacrifice demanded by the Socialists if I thought that such sacrifices would provide a remedy" (Mr. St. Loe Strachey in the *Spectator*).

hopeless from the religious standpoint, for it is not the jeer of the enemy alone, but the wail of the Church herself, which proclaims that she has lost any hold she ever had on the proletariat.

Physical destitution has stifled spiritual yearnings, and they are like sheep in their death. Nor is it any relief to show that in our complex civilisation these masses include many who have lapsed through their own fecklessness or vice. That only makes the problem the sadder and more urgent. And quite apart from any question of weakness or vice, the interval which still separates the lowest from the highest, the millworker who dies in the workhouse from the manufacturer who dies a millionaire, the hunger-stricken from the sybarite, is not essentially less than that which separated the slave from the slave-owner in the first century of our era, of the serf from the baron in the twelfth.

It may be true that it cannot now be honestly maintained that capital is still being concentrated into the hands of the few, with the result that the masses are becoming more and more impoverished. It is probably better distributed now than it has ever been; but it is still open to question whether even relatively the labourer is getting a larger share than he did in the development of the nation's wealth. There can be no question that absolutely he is not getting his fair share.*

* Mr. Chiozza Money has estimated the population of the United Kingdom at forty-three millions and the income at £1,710,000,000, and that it is divided as follows: A million and a quarter of the rich get £585,000,000; three and three-quarter millions of the comfortable get £245,000,000; leaving thirty millions of people for the remaining £880,000,000.

The Right Hon. Charles Booth, whose labours in this department have made him an expert authority, has calculated that owing to insufficient wages, fluctuating employment, and general precariousness of the means of support, as many as 30 per cent. of the entire population of London belong to the class whom he describes as poor, while 300,000 live in houses of one apartment. Of the entire population of England and Wales more than 11 per cent. live in overcrowded homes—that is, in houses with more than two persons to the apartment; while it is computed that in the Scottish towns over a million are living in overcrowded houses of one or two rooms. Of those who were over sixty years of age in England and Wales in the year 1890, as many as 218,743 were in receipt of poor relief. These are terrible figures in this era of the employee and citizen; and they suggest how little the franchise may mean for many a labourer, and how little it may uplift him to know that he is no longer a servant.

It must not for one moment be imagined that we have reached anything like finality in the upward march of the labourer from the depths of his bondage, or that Christians can leave things to take their course as if social salvation could come automatically. There are many side tracts, too, which the new spirit has not yet reached, and on which the new light has hardly fallen. How shameful it is, for example, that women and children should still require to work in shops for seventy or eighty hours a week because of the thoughtlessness of other women who never work at all, and the selfishness of men who work only

fifty-one or fifty-four hours in the week and are crying out that that is too long.

The new tenderness is very erratic and sectional as yet, and there is still much land to be possessed. It may be, indeed, that we shall never reach the goal until yet another description can be applied to the labourer, and we can speak of him not only as having been a slave, a serf, a servant, and an employee, but as now being an employer; that is, of course, his own employer. If that height could be attained and kept the labour strife would of necessity come to an end. There would not only be to each his work, but for each the reward of his work.

For this some look hopefully in the direction of co-operation, and it is interesting to find that co-operative societies in Great Britain have now an annual turnover of more £110,000,000, and have more than two and a quarter million members.* But although these societies have over a hundred thousand employees, they have not been able as yet to make the worker his own employer, and so to render the common interests of capital and labour not only a theory but a fact.

The truth is that much as this movement may have done in connection with distribution, it has hardly touched the fringe of the vastly more important, as well as vastly more difficult, problem of production. The present system may

* The volume of business in the English Wholesale Co-operative Society rose from £51,957 in 1864, to £24,902,842 in 1908, and it has more than 18,600 employees. The corresponding Wholesale Society in Scotland has nearly 7,600 employees, and its sales rose from £196,041 in 1870 to £7,531,126 in 1908.

add something to the income of the members of the various societies, but it is solving no vital social problem; whereas co-operative production would open up the way to the labour millennium were it only universalised.

Profit-sharing has also been advocated with a view to this end, as well as to provide workmen with some interest in the prosperity of the companies for which they work, by making them shareholders on a tiny scale. As yet, however, this has hardly caused much more than a ripple on the surface of the pool.* One of the most interesting of these schemes is that associated with the name of Sir Christopher Furness at Hartlepool. It has been in existence for little more than a year, but the first report was full of hope. The employee shareholders are to receive a 9 per cent. dividend and the ordinary shareholders 10 per cent. The directors say: "Under the new conditions of employment operations at the shipyards have proceeded with comfort to all concerned, and

* According to the "*Daily News* Year Book," at the end of 1909 there were 112 businesses which had adopted the principle of co-partnership. These have a capital of £1,941,112; and during the year their output was £4,214,542; while a profit was made of £182,663. In the town of Kettering there is a co-partnership clothing factory and a co-partnership corset factory, with 1,150 employees. They have an aggregate capital of £64,873, and during 1909 one workmen's society which made a profit of £5,509 allocated it as follows: To shares at 5 per cent., £704; to customers at 7d. in the £ on purchases, £2,130; to workers at 1s.4½d. in the £ on wages, £1,504; to share capital in addition to 5 per cent. interest, £375; to reserve fund, £440; with various other minor payments.

as a consequence with results in work highly satisfactory to our customers as well as to ourselves. Having in view not only the pleasure such facts afford the directors and staff, but more particularly the importance of meeting the convenience and fulfilling the wishes of those for whom the boats are built and repaired, to whom both duty and self-interest dictate that our best service should be rendered, the Board experience satisfaction in making known the fact that every steamer built and repaired since the commencement of the co-partnery scheme has been delivered in strict accordance with the terms of the contract. It may be noted that in a case where the company undertook to lengthen a steamer for a valued customer in six weeks, to enable it to resume its position by a fixed date on the line in which it was engaged, the work was completed in six days less than the stipulated time. This is only a sample of the evidence as to the value of the scheme and the loyalty of the men." *

Perhaps the most hopeful difference between the labour problem in the present era and at any former time is that there is a growing recognition of what the problem actually is, and a growing determination that some worthy solution of it must be found. All men see more clearly now than ever before that the nation

* Somewhat unexpectedly the working-men co-partners have voted against the continuance of this scheme by a majority of 106. This is attributed to several causes, one of them being that a large number of the men have been disappointed because the scheme has not provided the constant employment which they anticipated.

dare not perpetuate the existence of a class exposed to continuous degradation and always on the verge of starvation, if not actually below the subsistence line.

That the Empire may come to be governed by the votes of this class adds an element almost of comedy to a situation which is very tragic. Nor is it likely that any of the ordinary conventions or superstitions will be allowed to block the way. The generation which has made such inroads on personal liberty in order to extirpate infectious diseases and the like is now recognising that it is equally imperative that hotbeds of social disease be not allowed to persist. "God is in the poorest man's cottage. It is advisable that He be well housed." So says Ruskin, and all the people say amen.

It is in this growing recognition of what the problem is, and in this determination so surely born of the spirit of Christ, that we can find hope for the days to come if we are to find it anywhere. With all our pessimism, apparent and real, there is a widespread confidence, which means much for the future, that the nation can do what it so clearly sees it ought to do; and it is with the advent of such assurance that fruitful effort begins.

It is not until things have begun to mend that we have the promise and potency of effective reform. It is not despair, but hope, that is fruitful in achievement. Research has made it clear that it was so, for example, in connection with the great French Revolution which did so much for the whole of Europe. It was not when the wretchedness and misery of the old system

were at their worst that the momentous outbreak took place. It was when the new day had actually begun to break, and new hopes were stirring in their hearts, that the people rose in cruel wrath to make a crowning effort to secure deliverance and freedom. And so it was also in connection with the long, silent revolution which we have been tracing, which made the mediæval peasants free citizens, and is by and by to make all men free and give them an environment consistent with a clean and healthy, moral, and spiritual life. It did not grow out of despair, but out of hope. Despair is always futile and barren, and cruel withal; whereas hope makes ordinary men heroes and heroes giants.

So far as the Continent is concerned we can even specify the birthday and birthplace of this new spirit of expectation. It was born at Courtrai, in Belgium in the year 1302, when for the first time lowly-born burghers discovered that they could conquer mail-clad knights on the battlefield. Then was the fateful Day of Spurs, when four thousand golden spurs were hung up in the Cathedral as an offering to God, and then also was the day of new hope. It is a true instinct which still leads the Belgians to celebrate the anniversary of that day. A new sense of their manhood, a new recognition of what might after all be achieved, then thrilled though those who had hitherto accepted their fate as predestined hewers of wood and drawers of water, and all through the Germanic peoples it set the forces in motion which were yet to turn chattels into free men and self-governing nations.

It was out of that new hope in the heart of the

labourers and the new vision to which it gave birth—and surely hope and vision alike were born of Christ—that almost everything has grown which has made their lot nobler and brighter, and will yet complete the redeeming work. It is Christ who is still calling the dead from their tombs, for it is He who renews the soul, and out of that renewed personality there comes life from the dead.

Nothing but hope can save the nations, and therefore it is that there is such encouragement in the conviction now so widespread that a new era is at hand; that things can be, and therefore must be, put right. Some of the proposed solutions may be fantastic and illogical, but the hope itself is deathless, because Divine. The nations are not called to leap into the dark, but into the light. The call of the new era is not to do or die, but to do and live, and if only God's truth has free scope and is glorified in the lives of His people there can be no doubt either as to their obedience or as to the grand result.

In the slow but steady evolution of the citizen-employee, perhaps the least influential element has been that of legislation, although of necessity that is just the element which has attracted most attention. Mr. Benjamin Kidd says that "the evolution which is slowly proceeding in human society is not primarily intellectual, but religious in character,"* and religious forces are inevitably those which are most out of sight.

In the history of labour the legislature has

* Professor Alfred Marshall has it that "the two great forming agencies in the world's history have been the Religious and the Economic."

seldom if ever laid itself open to the charge of anticipating public opinion, at least for amelioration; and it has usually lagged far behind in the race. The Acts of Parliament which stand out as landmarks along the pathway of progress and tell of what was going on in the centuries otherwise silent, are for the most part the effects and not the causes of reform.

In the past, indeed, the legislature has done little more than register changes which had already taken place; and usually these changes were not due to political influences, but to moral and spiritual as well as economic forces, which were none the less real that we see them only through the haze of the years and are quite unable to tabulate them as we would like to do.

And so it will probably continue to be. The battlefield will be all over the land and not merely at Westminster; and Westminster will be content to bring up the rear. The hardest work will be over when Parliament puts its seal on the higher heights which have been attained. The faith of not a few in the redemptive power of Acts of Parliament is as unfounded as it is pathetic. Yet legislation has its place, for without it the stamp of permanence cannot be put on what has been accomplished; and it is amazing how soon measures which were passed in the face of bitter opposition bring the whole nation up to their level, so that they are not only accepted cheerfully but become the starting-point for further reform.

It is often affirmed that a nation cannot be made moral by Act of Parliament, but wise legislation has an enormous influence in forming and guiding public opinion. The Forbes

Mackenzie Act, by means of which Scotland obtained the benefits of Sunday closing more than half a century ago, is an outstanding instance of this. That measure was so much opposed at the time and was received with such disfavour that within a year of its being passed a Parliamentary Committee was appointed to inquire into its operation and see whether it should be continued. Yet no one ever suggests now that the nation should go back to its old ways. The cry rather is that England should have a similar Act.

All the same, it is becoming more and more manifest that the Labour battle will not be fought to its finish in the House of Commons. When the better time comes when the class war between labour and capital is at an end, when the cruel waste of the present system has ceased, and when the labourer gets his fair share of the fruits of his industry and skill out of the common purse, that blessed consummation will have been reached mainly through moral and spiritual influences, and among these Christianity must be supreme or abandon its claim to be from God. The very failure of the State to bring in this better day of itself, or rather the incompleteness of its work of itself, indicates that the nation must turn to Christ for leading and power.

Nowhere save in the gospel of God's grace can the necessary driving power be found, the force which alone can secure that change of heart and will without which enduring reforms can never be accomplished. Legislative reform of itself may be no more than a mere veneer, so that if you scratch the unregenerate modern you may soon come on

the primeval savage, perhaps even the primeval brute.

But what has been already accomplished is the proof that although we can point to far too few evidences of definite action in the evolution of the free labourer, Christianity has nevertheless been at work all through as the leaven of the whole lump, the light of the world, the salt of the earth; and that it has done vastly more than is sometimes supposed to lift men out of the depths and to keep the noblest of all ideals before them.

The development of personality on a wide scale really begins with the gospel, and that is the starting-point of everything which labour has achieved. The inadequacy of legislation without moral impulses, and of economic forces without spiritual power either to bring about permanent reform or to account for it, renders it imperative that the Christian ideal should be set forth in the full assurance that in it alone can the power be found which will lead to the social millennium after which so many aspire.

Not that it is easy to set this ideal forth in specific terms. It is spirit, and eludes analysis and even exposition. Yet it must be set forth in modern terms and so as to guide and satisfy modern aspirations; and must include such demands as these: That a man's daily work be recognised as his divine calling, his sacred vocation; that the place of the workman in the organic unity both of the Church and the State be fully and gratefully acknowledged; that a living wage be secured for the labourer while he is fit for work, so that he be able to live a decent and Christian life and have a suitable home; that an

adequate provision be made somehow for the labourer when he is aged, or otherwise unfit for work, so that the veterans of labour may be spared the stigma of pauperism; and that there be some final court of appeal with adequate compulsory powers in connection with all industrial disputes. And now we shall look at these demands in turn, that we may see how this many-sided Christian ideal might be realised in our national life.

The daily work of the labourer ought to be recognised as his divine vocation. That the Son of Man is among us as One who serves, and that His "Divine hand touched the plane," ought to spiritualise all labour; and unless it be so spiritualised it is not possible to rescue the labourer from the secular and servile spirit. So long as labour is an unsanctified remainder, the spirit of drudgery which debases everything it touches will be supreme in the greater part of human activity.

There can be no true and enduring dignity of labour until it is lifted to this level; and much as is said about the dignity of labour, the dignity of idleness is in the ascendant meanwhile.* Even the idealists labour as little as they can. Just as the ancients set themselves to get their work done by slaves, vicious and wasteful as they knew the system to be, there are many moderns who either work as little as they can, or do all their work

* M. Paul Lafargue, a son-in-law of Marx, has written a pamphlet, "Le Droit à la Paresse," which has been described as "An Ode to Laziness," and has been translated into almost every European language (see Miss Stoddart, "The New Socialism," pp. 46, 203). (The idle poor are to seek to parody the idle rich.)

with the hope of being able to retire from it soon and do nothing during the remainder of their days.

"The freemen of Rome could hardly be said to work, they fought or lived on the produce of fighting." "One of the leading features of Attic culture was the contempt of trade, or indeed of any occupation which so absorbed a man as to deprive him of complete leisure,"* and it is this false pagan ideal which is again sought after by very many. The underpaid clerk not only thinks himself superior to the artisan who has to soil his hands, but even in the Church many agree with him and show him a deference they deny to the other. As for the talk about the "horny hand," and much else of the same sort, it is mainly cant.

Some think that it is only in connection with religion, or the want of it, that inconsistency abounds; but it gathers round many who study Carlyle and Ruskin and talk about the glory of handicrafts and the nobility of those who conquer the waste places and make the wondrous purpose of the Creator explicit by their toil. Splendid as their doctrine is, they are content to let others call forth the implicit in nature by their industry and skill.

Idleness is rightly included among the deadly sins, and it cannot be too strongly insisted on that any worker, be he artisan or artist or author, who does less than his best is not only an inferior workman, but a bad man. The best work can be done only when it is seen to be a holy vocation. Those alone can do their best who hear Christ saying to them: "Raise the stone and thou shalt find Me.

* The only man in the Greek State deemed worthy of esteem was he who did not require to work.

Cleave the wood and there I am also." "In the elder days of art the builders wrought with greatest care, each minute and unseen part, for the great God sees everywhere."

It is easy enough to understand and sympathise with the demand of the Social Democratic Federation when they advocate a forty-eight hours week, with a minimum wage of thirty shillings a week for all workers. It is easy, also, to see that it is a recognition of the dignity of labour to insist on equal pay for both sexes for the performance of equal work. But when a writer like the author of "The Evolution of the Fourth Estate," says that just as it is the interest of the employer to get as much work out of his workers for as little wages as possible, it is the interest of the workers to get as high wages as possible for as little labour as possible, it is obvious that he is on wrong lines, and that nothing but moral and economic disaster await those who occupy such a position.

It may be the application of the principle which passes current with so many, that the first duty of man is to sell in the dearest and buy in the cheapest market, but it inflicts the supreme insult, the unpardonable outrage on labour. It removes it from the moral sphere and robs it of its essential dignity. Yet the likelihood is that he was simply putting into words the debased and debasing theory which is operative in multitudes of lives, and is working infinite woe. Wherever the ideal is that the worker should work as little as he can, there can be no thought of work as a divine calling and something done for God, and in co-operation with God; and the secularisation and degradation of human activity is inevitable.

Some other pathway than that must be found to the golden age which is yet to come; another way than the consecration of laziness and the exaltation of cynicism is not far to seek.

Everyone has heard it said of some worker manifestly happy in his work that he had found his vocation, and therein we see what ought to be the ideal for all. It is in the interest of the organism that each worker should get his right work to do, the work to which his gifts have called him, the work he can do with satisfaction and pleasure. "The tools belong to the man who can use them," and the end of all education, whether in the home or the school, should be to place each where he can use his tools to the best advantage. Only thus can society be a genuine moral organism. Only thus can the best work be done and every talent employed. Only thus can the ordinary and commonplace be made divine.

It is the tragedy of many a life, and what makes labour hateful to multitudes, that the square men are so often forced into round holes, although all the while the square holes which they should have filled are either empty or filled by similar misfits. The gifts which every child possesses ought to be so developed that every worker will find himself at the work he was meant to do, and in doing which alone he can either find his true self or truly serve the social order of which he is a necessary and integral part.

Those who are so trained and placed are not likely to count their working hours little more than lost, or to think mainly of the time when they can throw down their tools and enjoy themselves. Nor does it follow that those whose gifts

or bent cannot be discovered are doomed to be misfits or mere unskilled labourers. God indicates His will regarding the work which each should be fitted to do not only by the bestowal of gifts which all can discern, but also by environment.

Our circumstances must not be looked at as if they were ours apart from Him, or as if they had no message for the work of life. If environment be so secularised there will be little that is ideal left in the lives of most; and those workers who loyally follow the leading of their circumstances, and seek through education and opportunity to know the will of God and do it, will assuredly find that whatever their work is it is God's calling for them.

As for the occupations which all would avoid if they could, and which are filthy, oppressive, dangerous, and even degrading, machinery is already doing much to solve that problem, even if it also adds to it somewhat; and it will undoubtedly do more. For the rest, a little arrangement combined with some unselfishness would easily prevent what remains being made a drudgery for any class. In many cases, indeed, such work might be reserved for such criminals as may still be found in the ideal state. As things are, however, this work falls to a sort of helot or pariah class, the flotsam and jetsam of our civilisation, those who through vice and misfortune have drifted outside, and their remuneration seems to diminish as their work becomes repulsive or unsafe. Only those who can get nothing else to do will do it, and apparently they must just take what they can get.* This

* Socialists seek to meet this difficulty in a variety of

helot class is, of course, largely the product of the drink sin.

The Committee on Physical Deterioration in 1904 reported that if the drink evil were removed three-fourths of the difficulty with regard to poverty and deterioration would disappear with it. But that only makes the situation the sadder, and until labour has been rehabilitated by the gospel, and its place and value in human life have been made apparent, nothing really effective will be done. Drink-inducing conditions of labour must be removed. The primal curse on labour must be reversed in Christ, Himself a labourer; and work must everywhere be made the avenue to true blessedness, by all workers everywhere becoming fellow-labourers with God.

It is from this standpoint that such a question as an eight-hours day must be viewed if all its issues are to be understood. If the demand for a shorter day means that the less a man works the better, it is a grave insult, and can only end in the deeper degradation of the labourer. That involves a false ideal, both morally and physically; an ideal which cannot but beget the spirit of the slave, and along these lines lie scamping, drudgery, and revolt. This is an aspect of the case which must be dealt with if any progress is to be made. On

ways as by giving higher wages for such work, or by giving those who do it a shorter day. "If six hours be regarded as the normal working day, it is quite easy to believe that for the sake of the larger leisure, with its opportunities for the pursuit of special interests, many a man would gladly accept a disagreeable position for three hours a day" (John Spargo: "Socialism," p. 219. See Miss Stoddart, "The New Socialism," pp. 88, 89, 233).

the other hand, if the demand for a shorter day means that the worker is seeking adequate time and opportunity for the all-round growth of his being, intellectual and spiritual as well as physical, and for more fully assuming his responsibilities in the home, the Church, and the State, and at the same time to be able to throw himself more heartily and healthily into his work while he is at it, it is altogether in the right direction.

If everyone does his share as he ought, there is not eight hours' work for all who ought to be working; and that many have to work longer only shows that others are not doing their part. They toil not, neither do they spin, and others have to do their share. Nor can it be too much insisted on that as a moral and spiritual being it is intolerable that any man's life should be wholly occupied with working, eating, and sleeping, as the lives of too many have been occupied in the past; even although all these things can be done to the glory of God.*

Even among Christians, however, comparatively few seem to realise the moral and spiritual value of work as the gospel proclaims it, or to see that it is mainly through their daily toil they must work out their salvation, if they are to work it out at all. They speak of Christian work as if it were something to be done to advance the kingdom of God in their spare time and after

* In his "Utopia," Sir Thomas More makes provision for a six-hours day, as some modern Socialists also do; but it is of the very essence of his scheme that "no man may live idle, but that every one may follow his trade diligently." His ideal includes the duty to work as well as the right to work.

their ordinary work is over. But Christian work must include the ordinary occupations, whatever they may be, or it will do little to bring in the kingdom which is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

Conversely, any labour which for any reason whatsoever cannot be made Christian service should be given up at once. Any theory, either of life or of the gospel, which does not take up and spiritualise the daily calling, occupying as it does well nigh the half of every busy career, is altogether inadequate and unworthy.

It is from this standpoint that what is called the "ca-canny" policy must be dealt with if its menace is to be realised. If it be viewed as part of the labour warfare with capital, the analogy to it is not to be found in those who carry on guerilla tactics, but in those who are spies and liable to be shot at sight. It is not true that everything is fair in war, since even there Christ has made His influence felt, and to fire on the Red Cross is to be for ever infamous.

Nor is it sufficient to claim that this policy which panders to what is meanest in men may have its root in good impulses, and in the desire of the better workmen to prevent their superior skill and strength being injurious to those who are slower or worse equipped.

What is called "horsing" is bad, and the name is hardly fair to the horse; for I understand that when a wise farmer sends out two carts he puts the slower horse in front, that it, and not the other, may set the pace. But what becomes of the moral character of the work or of the spiritual personality of the worker in the case of an eye-

servant, or of one who scamps his work whenever he can? What can the passing hours of the day, and of day after day, mean for the labourer who has neither pride nor pleasure nor ordinary interest in his work which takes up so large a proportion of his time? It is almost inevitable that such a workman will find an outlet for his perverted manhood in coarse and vicious pursuits when his work is over. He will be like a dog off the chain, just because he has done his work as if he were a dog and no man, and as if he wore a chain and were a bondman in all but name.

It has been said that the ideal for the artisan is that he should do his work in the spirit of a profession, and there is something weirdly unprofessional, as well as unmanly, for a worker to long for nothing all through the day so much as for the hour when the hammer or mallet or pen can be thrown down. Every hour spent in that spirit is lost, and no such work can be done, either for the glory of God or the good of man; and least of all can it promote the honour and moral development of the worker.* The true worker puts heart as well as brain into all he does, and makes every day a day of divine service, a contribution to the unfolding of the divine purpose;

* "If you want knowledge," says Ruskin, "you must toil for it; if food, you must toil for it; and if pleasure you must toil for it. But men do not acknowledge this law, or strive to evade it, hoping to get their knowledge and food and pleasure for nothing; and in this effort they either fail of getting them, and remain ignorant and miserable, or they obtain them by making other men work for their benefit; and then they are tyrants and robbers."

and the foremost labour problem is that God should be in everything that is done and that His honour and glory should be promoted by everything the labourer does.

When that ideal has been attained art, industry, and religion will flourish side by side as trees of the Lord's planting, and the wilderness shall rejoice and blossom like the rose. Corot began all his wonderful landscapes with the sky, and every worker should begin his day's work with God. That would make him walk with erect frame and manly tread, and no power on earth or under the earth would be able to deprive him of his rights.

The dignity and importance of the labourer's place in the social organism must be fully recognised and acquiesced in ungrudgingly. With few exceptions modern students of the labour problem seek such a synthesis of individualism and Socialism as would secure the best of both, and yet avoid their dangers, when they are taken by themselves. Society is so truly an organic whole that when one class in the community suffers all must suffer, and the ideal is a genuine reciprocity in which every one is at once a means and an end. No error avenges itself so surely or so sadly as acquiescence in the existence of a helot class, or building up the structure of the social order on the presupposition that such a class is needed to be hewers of wood and drawers of water for the rest. Reformers, therefore, seek some standpoint from which the apparently warring forces may be seen as partial and incomplete in themselves, and as meant to come together in a higher unity, and each to the advantage of the other and the whole.

The labour problem can never be solved so long as the labourer is not looked on as an integral and necessary part of the social organism. To suppose that he can be a means without also being an end is not only to contradict the very conception of an organism, it is the sheerest folly, especially in days when he has such power in the State. In the true reciprocity to which the Christian ideal calls us, the individual, whether employer or employee, will neither be crushed under the jagged iron wheels of the blind machinery of the State, nor thought of as capable of attaining his fullest life apart from the well-being of the entire community.

Nor is such an ideal either fanciful or visionary. It is of the very essence of the dignity of man as made in the image of God and redeemed by Christ; and of his place in the greater whole. If even a stoic could say, "I am a man and think nothing human alien to me," how much more must the Christian, who worships Christ, who became a man and is a man yet, claim that there can be no stigma of inferiority, social or other, imposed on any class of men. Or if even a state of universal selfishness, of *bellum omnium contra omnes*, could be thought of as leading to a social contract which made settled government practicable, how much more should the Christian conception of an organism in which each not only finds his place and does his work, but in which all are brethren, lead to the realisation of such a unity in blessed fact, in this era of the Holy Spirit.

In no other way than through the subtle, all-pervading influence of such a master-conception can the selfishness of employers and employees

alike be overcome; and nothing less than the gospel, with its infinite spiritual resources and its Divine power, can vanquish this malign power enshrined in evil traditions and maxims, and sanctioned by antipathies and prejudices. This kind goeth not out but by prayer and consecration.* It will not yield to philosophy, which only touches the few, and often affects even them in a doctrinaire and helpless fashion. It will not yield to mere compulsory legislation, even were such legislation possible, for there is that in man which will not be coerced, and the power of passive resistance is endless. It can go out only before Him who is the Son of God as well as the Son of Man. And His gospel has set itself against it from the first.

St. Paul argues expressly against the absurdity of any one saying to another in the organism of life, "I have no need of thee"; and it is one of the defects of some popular conceptions of Christianity that they neither recognise the significance of this, nor set it forth as the Divine ideal and law to be applied all round. It cannot be too strongly insisted on that the gospel does not allow that any, no matter how poor or insignificant, may be treated as a means and not also as an end. It claims a place for each in the

* "It would be a dangerous error," says Dr. Menger, in "Neue Staatslehre," p. 53, "if we were to assume that even the most mighty overthrow of social institutions could essentially change the fundamental impulses of human nature. We must reckon," he says, "with the continuance of evil as well as good passions in the breast of man" (quoted in Miss Stoddart's "The New Socialism," p. 98).

living organism, and thus confers the true dignity of life on all who enter into its fulness.

In a lecture at Cambridge on Pan-Islamism, the Professor of Arabic in the University there declared some time ago that Mohammedanism has been more loyal to this fundamental principle of the gospel than Christianity. "The convert to Islam," he said, "no matter to what race he may belong, is on the whole admitted freely and ungrudgingly to the social privileges as well as obligations of the community with which he has cast in his lot." And it was asked whether it can be frankly claimed that the same holds good of the convert to Christianity, in India for instance. According to the lecturer this could not be claimed, and that as a result Christianity is making less progress either in Asia or Africa than Mohammedanism, although its propaganda is vastly more extensive and costly.*

It is not easy to say how much is in this criticism, and probably the lecturer did not realise what it means as a handicap that conversion to Christianity involves a spiritual change which is not involved in conversion to Mohammedanism. Yet it must be admitted that what is here denounced as regards work abroad certainly has its parallel at home in the insufferable air of patronage with which the Church so often treats her working-class adherents, a patronage as intolerable as it is deadly. There is only one lower depth, that which the workers themselves fathom when they acquiesce in the inequality and snobbery, and in their own degradation; and,

* "Lectures on the History of the Nineteenth Century," p. 309.

with a spirit so alien to Christian humility, become parasites and fawning dependents.

The worst thing about slavery is that it tends to make its victims slaves at heart,* and nothing in the work of the gospel has been more remarkable than the way in which it has made those who once had the servile spirit free in every sense of the word. Yet the modern Church, with its mission halls for the poor and its club buildings for the rich, has gone in face of its holy calling; sometimes with good intentions, but sometimes also to keep the lower orders in their place; and it is matter for congratulation, and not for regret, that so few of the lower orders acquiesce in the arrangement.

As for the arrangement itself, the spirit of it comes out in all sorts of ways, and is a reminiscence of the olden time when the labourer himself hardly resented being treated as an inferior. But it is bitterly resented now, even by those who have never analysed their bitterness and hardly realise what it means.

I have heard good people express gratification that a working man had become a Sabbath school teacher, or had led in prayer at their prayer meeting, as if that were something wonderful. But why should not a working man, a Christian joiner or mason or carter, be as fit to do such things in the Church of the Carpenter of Nazareth as a Christian merchant or lawyer or clerk? Is it to be wondered at that the labourer, even when worthy of all respect, does not get his place without a conflict in the social organism, when

* As Homer puts it: "Zeus takes away half the manhood of a man when slavery overtakes him."

he only gets it in this fashion in the Church, where of all places on earth, more even than in the law courts, all men ought to be equal?

There is nothing which is more fruitful in class hatred and civil war than the caste which still prevails in the Christian Church. Nothing has done more to promote the growth of the anti-Christian spirit which prevails among many sections of the working classes. Every new set of statistics of church attendance shows an ever-smaller proportion of the community at public worship, and with the exception of the very rich the working classes seem more completely estranged than any other section.

In some towns it is comparatively rare for genuine working men to be connected with a church. Even what are paraded as working-class congregations are composed for the most part, so far as the men are concerned, and they are always the minority, of clerks, foremen, and small shop-keepers, and seldom have any considerable number of artisans.

And even if all who are claimed were genuine, must it not be asked what are they among so many? With P.S.A.'s and Brotherhoods, and much else thrown in, no more than a fraction of the *bonâ-fide* tradesmen in our great public works make any profession of religion; and I have known public works where practically not one man made profession of being a Christian, and where a converted man, if such was to be found, was far more likely to be among the irregulars than in the Church. Nor is it of any use to ignore the fact that the forces which make for unbelief where working men congregate, are all reinforced by the convic-

tion that Christianity, as they know it, is not on their side frankly, or without an air of condescension and patronage.*

It is equally impossible to deny, as friends of the Church would like to be able to deny it, that this conviction is not wholly without foundation. Many of the charges made are quite groundless, and some of the best Christians of our time are working men, just as many leaders in the Churches are the best friends labour has; yet it cannot be denied that the spirit of caste and snobbery is very prevalent in the places where it should be unknown, and that miserable class distinctions which had their origin when the labourer was a serf are still recognised as if they were of Divine institution.

As a working man who has been among working men all my days, and the son of a Christian artisan, I cannot pretend to be surprised that the labourers of our land cannot see that the Church of the Living God has been their friend and champion, as it should have been. It is sheer futility to argue that the Church should know nothing of class distinctions, for that is just what she has persistently known, and never more so than in

* Some would distinguish here between Christianity and the Church, and among some Socialists there seems to be a moving away from the old position that Christianity is the enemy of the popular demands and the partisan of the capitalists, to the teaching "that there is nothing in Christianity so far as we"—*Justice*, the organ of the Social Democratic Federation—"can discover that militates against its disciples advocating social democracy. On the contrary, it appears to inculcate the principle of universal equality and brotherhood."

these democratic days. Not only so, but the applause which some have for the Carpenter of Nazareth, when they speak of Christ and early experiments in Christian communism, never meant less than it does now. Indeed, it has often been most offensive when an air of patronage entered into such references to our Lord.

It is often forgotten by both sides in the modern conflict with unbelief that revolutionary as Jesus was, the primary revolution for which He sought was spiritual, and that He always insisted "ye must be born again." But the unwelcome fact remains that the great mass of the labourers, as they are now organised, are of opinion that the Church in all its branches is largely on the side of the capitalists; that among Conformists and Nonconformists alike money has far too much power; that ministers dine with the rich and preach at the poor, instead of doing the exact opposite, as they ought; and that historically viewed Christianity has helped to stereotype social conditions in which they get far more than their share of the burdens, and far fewer of the rewards than their share. And those who know most about the facts will find it most difficult to repel this attack.

It is true that the best friends of labour have been inside the Church, and that they have helped the labourer most by letting the gospel tell all round; but it is also true that they had often to suffer for their insight and to face the opposition of their obscurantist fellow Churchmen. Even the progress which has been made has been due to the Christianity within the Churches rather than to the Churches themselves, at least officially viewed.

Even yet caste is nowhere more powerful than

in the Church of Christ. Nowhere is money mightier, and it seldom happens that inconvenient questions are asked as to how the money was made. It is enough that it be there, to ensure respect and influence. Nor is there anywhere more of that patronage of the poor which is quite as hateful as truckling to the rich. As for the results of all this, there is overwhelming testimony to the alienation of the working classes from the Churches.

Those who deny that there is such an estrangement are either ignorant, or are in flamboyant mood at a church bazaar or some similar function; and it is significant that some of the most popular of the new generation of labour leaders are unbelievers, whereas the most outstanding of the older leaders were Christian men who had been trained for leadership in Church work.

Not that it is the Church alone which seeks to patronise the working man, or takes a kindly interest in him now that he has the vote. All the party caucuses seek his friendship, and the party Codlins and Shorts vie with each other in their attentions to him, especially at election times.

It is easy to understand how it is that there is keen suspicion in labour circles about the overtures which come to them from the party managers. While Whig and Tory dispute as to which has done most for labour, or as to which can promise most, the labourer himself must often be in doubt as to whether either of them has realised that even apart from his vote he is an all-important part of the nation; that he is too strong to be patronised; and that he needs no party whip to teach him how to act.

The recognition of these facts—and not as hard, but welcome facts—is not only an integral part of the Christian ideal, it is the starting point for all the progress yet to be made, and Christian men and women who love their Lord should let the truth, as it is in Christ, tell all round in public and private that the atmosphere in which our politics live and move and have their being may be Christian, pure and holy, sympathetic and just, gracious and strong.

The labourer ought to receive a living wage as the fruit of his labour. This demand is a genuine Christian contribution to this discussion, and if it could only be looked at apart from the influence of inveterate prejudices and mere theories the justice of it and the necessity for it would be apparent to all who are walking in the light. It has been assailed as impracticable and absurd, both by the orthodox and heterodox economists, but is an absolute essential of any industrial state even approximately ideal, that the labourer should be able to live a seemly life on the fruit of his toil. Not only so, but the claim is one of those fruitful conceptions which persist in spite of opposition and ridicule, and even apparent refutation when once they have found expression, and which always win in the end. Even after they have been thrice slain and oftener, they are alive still, and still move.

It is no real objection to say that it is inadequate, and that no one can tell exactly what a living wage is. Such a principle, of necessity, must be indefinite, and what a living wage is depends very much on local circumstances. It is not quite the same for town and country, and

may vary somewhat with different trades. The disconcerting fact must even be faced that it may differ for different persons.

But that is partly due to the fact that it is a principle and not a rule; and if it were once honestly recognised it would be easy enough anywhere to discover what a living wage is. A jury of matrons could settle it to a shilling a week in any district; for it means a wage which would render not only squalor and misery impossible alongside of integrity and sobriety, but which would also render undue pressure and sordid economy unnecessary; and impossible as it may seem to the doctrinaire to draw such a line, the workmen themselves could soon draw it. It may be added that even the Independent Labour Party have never demanded more than their fair share.

As a matter of fact, the principle of a living wage is already in operation.* Many employers, even among those who deride the doctrine as absurd, are guided by it in the wages they pay. Where they might get hungry men to work for fifteen shillings a week, they pay twenty, because they have not the heart to offer them less than what they think can keep life in; and in many places where there is no explicit standard wage an implicit living wage has tacitly been evolved.

The truth is that most theorists are better than their theories in political economy. The heart is

* "Perhaps one of the most curious facts in the history of human error is the denial by the common political economist of the possibility of thus regulating wages, while for all the important and much of the unimportant labour on the earth, wages are already so regulated" (Ruskin: "Unto This Last," Essay I.).

often obstinately illogical and even irrational, and introduces many a compensation. When employers and employed come together they often find that prejudices and statistics go by the board in their actual contact, and that they are not as far apart as they thought. Economically they cannot be far apart, since in the end of the day they stand or fall together, while morally and sympathetically they are of the same flesh and blood, essentially alike in yearnings and desires.

The same thing comes out in connection with women's work, and especially in domestic service. In such work supply and demand only fix the wages in a very general way; if there are those who take advantage of weakness and ignorance to underpay their servants, there are far more who have little regard to buying in the cheapest market. In every district there is a standard which is recognised even when there are many out of work; and casual women workers are often paid half a crown a day, with extras, when others would do the work for eighteenpence. Where there are large numbers of workers, as in a factory, it is of course different, sometimes sadly so; but a principle which works well anywhere can hardly be ruled out of court, without discussion, as either impossible or absurd.

It is through such an issue as this that the gospel not only helps the cause of labour, but rehabilitates itself with the labourer. It insists that "the labourer is worthy of his hire," and that by means of his hire he must be able to develop a clean and healthy humanity, as made in God's image and redeemed by the blood of Christ.

Those who seek to help in this department do not require to be experts in the "wages fund," or other theories and formulas still accepted or now discredited. Nor do they require to identify themselves with any attack on the ordinary political economy, whether from the Socialist standpoint, or from that of writers like Carlyle or Ruskin.

But they must be able to insist that moral considerations should be kept in the very forefront, that the whole situation be looked at in the light of the Cross, and that the entire discussion be carried through on the spiritual platform, which is the highest of all. They must insist increasingly that it must never be forgotten that it is not theories alone which are involved, but men and women and children; not workshops alone, nor statistics nor Acts of Parliament, but the home and the Church, the nation and humanity; and that however it is done, men must be able to make their lives worth living, and that the means whereby a decent moral life, a life in harmony with their origin as spiritual, must be brought within reach of all who are willing to work. The heart of the nation must be taught to see that it is revolting to imagine that there can be prosperity of any sort unless this very moderate demand be freely met and fully satisfied.

This doctrine of a living wage is essentially Christian, and is the outcome of the moral necessity that men and women—who were made for God, and made in the image of God, so that they can only find their true end, and do their true work, in Him—should be enabled to live as spiritual beings, and not as dumb, driven cattle, of use only for the enrichment of others. Exceptions

apart, this demand has not been inspired by any spirit of selfishness, but by the growing yearning of the labourer that he and his family should have similar opportunities for developing their true life in the beauty of affection and intelligence as are enjoyed by those whose means are ampler and whose leisure is greater.

Only those in touch with the labouring classes can appreciate how much the modern demand for holidays, for example, is bound up with an increasing ability to enjoy the beauties of nature and develop an all-round life, a life intellectual and spiritual, as well as physical. Everything and everybody would benefit by the satisfaction of such yearnings and by their development, and if this involves the payment of higher wages the increase will be far more than made up in better work and heartier service. Whatever makes the labourer a better man increases the value of his labour; and experience has shown that the best-paid workmen are usually most truly worth their wages.

Some wise employers hold on purely economical grounds that those who are not worth good wages are not worth anything. Nor is it any objection to this doctrine that it cannot be applied by rule-of-thumb or like the multiplication table. It involves consideration, insight, and sympathy.

A new atmosphere is needed, and if in the conflict between this great moral principle of life and work and the ordinary parrot-cry of the most dismal theory of the dismal science, the Christianity of our time has even seriously to consider what her choice should be, it is not to be wondered at, it is hardly to be deplored, that

working men do not crowd into her courts. If she throws away this new opportunity which has come to her, as Luther threw away the opportunity which came to him, and refuses to cast her influence on the Christian side in the unceasing struggle, she will doom herself to another exile, which will be none the less sad that it will be abundantly deserved. But there are many indications that this time she will choose the better part and let her light shine on the road along which the labourer is journeying. If she does, multitudes will see the Saviour in that light and follow on to know the Lord.

That many workers are not yet receiving a living wage is unfortunately not open to dispute. The proofs of this are overwhelming. Investigation has shown that under favourable circumstances and present prices a father and mother and two children require 18s. 10d. per week to sustain them in physical efficiency; while 26s. is the minimum required where there are four children. Even that provision is not only less liberal than the workhouse allowance, it allows nothing for tobacco or drink, for holidays or recreation, and includes nothing for doctor or church. It does not even provide for a newspaper to enable the citizen to rule the empire with intelligence and knowledge. Yet it is notorious that the wages of multitudes are below what is thus considered subsistence-level.

Taking irregularity of employment, sickness, and other interruptions into account, it is believed that more than a fourth of all the labourers in our towns get less than these sums as remuneration for their labour; and it has to be remembered that nearly

four-fifths of our population now live in towns. In Glasgow the average wage of unskilled labourers when employed is 18s. a week; and in the same city the average wage of railway carters is 23s. for a week of eighty hours. Carters with private contractors get 24s., the corresponding figures for all Scotland being 22s. and 20s. According to Mr. Seebohm Rowntree, in the city of York, in a year of great prosperity, 45 per cent. of the working classes earned less than was sufficient to maintain them in physical efficiency.*

Everybody knows now about the thirteen millions in our land who are always within measurable distance of starvation, but comparatively few realise that that means that the normal condition of the average working man is that the margin between him and destitution is so small that a month of bad trade or sickness or unexpected strain of any sort brings him and those dependent on him face to face with hunger. And, of course, this is all complicated and the misery of it increased by the drunkenness and improvidence of those who can least afford the waste, and worse than waste, which is involved.

One result is a generation of physical and moral weaklings who are a grave and perpetual menace to the well-being of the nation. Not that it is quite fair to speak as if the wages problem were mainly a question of temperance, good management, and

* For all the United Kingdom, "twenty shillings and sixpence was estimated as the average weekly wages of the manual workers in 1903, and in the worker's wage-earning year from six to ten weeks at least are lost through sickness, bad weather, or accident" (Miss Stoddart, "The New Socialism," p. 35).

thrift. Drunkenness is an effect as well as a cause of misery; and while many are making what is bad tenfold worse by their vice, and only too many have no notion of what thrift means, there are some for whom the easiest escape from their sordid existence, with all its cares and hopelessness, is that which indulgence in strong drink offers them. "Kings may be blest, but Tam was glorious, O'er a' the ills of life victorious."

In many cases, too, no amount of thrift would make the wage earned sufficient to maintain a bright and comfortable home. Nor is it an adequate reply to say that some manage, and manage with credit too, to live on less than what has been declared to be the irreducible minimum. That means such a strain that when weakness and disease come there is no power of resistance left. It is indeed heartbreaking that there are those who pander to vice in the name of social reform, and decry thrift in the name of what they call the iron law of wages.

But it is also sad when temperance reformers speak as if nothing were required for bringing in the millennium but local veto. Character is more than circumstances, but character and circumstances are closely allied. Prolonged hours of labour and insufficient food, for example, seem to bring the bodies and minds of some toilers into a condition which creates a craving for the false excitement of alcohol. It has been stated that in steamships the firemen are more given to drunkenness than the seamen, and that that is due to the exhausting nature of a stoker's work. It has, of course, to be gratefully acknowledged that few temperance reformers confine their efforts to

securing total abstinence pledges; and it has constantly to be affirmed that every other social problem would be brought nearer solution were the drink problem solved. No power on earth could keep a sober nation in bonds.

But the social problems stand or fall together, and it is a Christian duty to make drink-inducing conditions as rare as possible, and to drive away the awful monotony which lies like a nightmare on so many, and makes them crave the unhealthy excitement and unlawful stimulus of strong drink. It can never be the part of a reformer to offer apologies for drunkenness, so filthy and degrading, but it is the business of every reformer to remove temptation wherever he can.

Personally, I am all for temperance reform, for safeguarding the tempted and the young, for rescuing the fallen, for prohibition indeed; but the more I know about the situation in our land the more do I see that that is far from being the whole problem. The means of a decent living must be brought within reach of every worker, and even if it is the case that that has been approximately done for such tradesmen as are regularly employed, the Church of Christ cannot overlook the host of casual and unskilled labourers whose wages are miserable at the best.

The problem of the unskilled who cannot lay anything aside for a rainy day is very urgent, and cannot but appeal to every Christian heart. Nothing is more certain than that spiritual yearnings are crushed by physical destitution, and slight as the hold of the Church is on any class of workers, it is slightest of all on the class below the poverty line. So far as they are concerned,

it is almost as if there were no gospel and no Church.

Then there are those who are often unemployed even when trade is good. Some of them are loafers who sometimes fare better without working than others fare who work hard; and for all such the duty to work must come with the right to work; but many of them are only unfortunate and feckless, and whatever economists may do Christ's Church must feed the hungry, bring hope to the despairing, and inspire manhood in the degraded. If any trade is unable to afford a living wage to the worker as well as a profit to the employer the sooner it disappears the better. Land is allowed to go out of cultivation when it does not pay to grow grain on it, and a trade might well cease to be carried on when it cannot pay both masters and men.*

But it is seldom that such a course would be required. The trades in which the hugest fortunes are made are often those where the lowest wages are paid; and employers who live in indulgence and leave millions when they die are sometimes those who assert most strenuously that it would ruin them to pay a farthing more an hour. Yet as experience has shown, it is more remunerative to pay wages which enable the workers to live in comfort and self-respect than to starve them and beget the spirit of the serf.

Nothing is more expensive in the end than a degraded class, and if the Church could only

* As was seen above, this principle was recognised by both sides of the House when The Trade Boards Act was passing through Parliament.

get this part of the Christian ideal realised she would not merely bring blessing to the labourer and the land, she would do much to lead the common people to hear the word of the Lord gladly, and thereby to hasten the coming of the Kingdom of God.

There ought to be some adequate provision for the labourer when he is no longer fit for work. Old Age Pensions are now happily within the sphere of practical politics in the mother country as well as in the colonies which showed us the way; and only those who live among the aged poor can realise what a difference they have made. January, 1909, was the beginning of a new era for many, and it was pathetic to meet those who were unable to believe in their good fortune till they had handled the money. It seemed too good news to be true. It is even more pathetic to meet those who are eagerly counting the weeks and months which lie between them and the haven. Never before were so many willing to be accounted old. Rightly understood such pensions are simply an extension, just and necessary, of the principle of the living wage, and the more that is made operative the easier will it be to provide pensions for all who require them. It has been made clear that it is altogether a question of money, and the nation which spent two hundred and fifty millions on the Boer war, and insists that whatever is needed to make its Navy invincible must be found, can easily provide all that is needed to consummate this great reform which has already dispelled the shadows from so many who are going down the hillside of life.

Not long ago indignation was expressed by

Lord Roberts and others at the thought of any of our Crimean veterans eating the pauper's bread, and there ought to be indignation as hot at the thought that any who have served their country in the industrial strife should be so degraded. Peace has her victories no less than war, and the veterans of peace should not be worse off than the veterans of war. If only the matter is put on a right footing, the money will be forthcoming, and nothing is more shameful than the sinful waste which still prevails side by side with desolating poverty; or the crushing want which is allowed to persist beside enormous and ever-increasing wealth.

As for the Church allowing her veterans, those for whom Christ died, and who have been at the same Table of the Lord with their richer brethren, to come under the taint of pauperism, or to die in poor-houses where even the tie that binds husband and wife is ignored, the thought is abhorrent, and that it does not send a thrill of indignation all over the Church shows how far we have drifted from the Christian ideal.

The Presbyterian Church of Ireland, a Church which is small, but original and brave, and which has long carried out a splendid programme for its orphans, has now tackled the question of its aged poor, and is meeting with encouraging success. It began this work before the State, and the introduction of Old Age Pensions has not hampered but helped it in its noble efforts. All honour to the brave Irishmen who have led the way, for this is even more a question for the Church than for the State.

O, the shame of it, that there should be an out-

cry all over the land at the discovery that some Balaclava or Inkermann hero has died in poverty and neglect, and that there should be no such outcry all over the Church at the discovery that one of Christ's little ones has gone down to the grave in hunger and nakedness or eating the pauper's bread !

It has been made clear, however, that private enterprise, and even the enterprise of the Church, cannot meet all the demands of the situations, much as kindly charity can do and is doing. Only those in the inner circles of Church work have any conception of what the Church is doing directly and indirectly for the poor;* but the State as ennobled by Christ has its sphere, too. It is no longer thought of as a magnified policeman, but as an ordinance of God, and this is the national recognition of religion which meanwhile is most required.

The great Friendly Societies, as well as Trade Unions on their provident side, have also done much to mitigate distress and provide for those who are no longer able to work, and they will be encouraged to do more now that there are these pensions to serve as a nest-egg for the thrifty. But neither are they sufficient for all the responsibilities involved.

* At the close of the hard winter of 1909-10, the Glasgow Presbytery of the United Free Church of Scotland could say that not one family within the pale of that Church had been allowed to go without the necessaries of life, while many had been enabled to pay their rent and get warm clothing for their children and themselves. The City Relief Fund was administered at a cost of 18 per cent. The Church Relief Fund at a cost of 1 per cent.

Even contributory schemes for which so much might otherwise be said come short in this respect that the very neediest are just those who could make no provision, and even the thriftless must not be left to perish. They ought rather to be provided with this new incentive to thrift; for the sheer impossibility of providing anything that could avail from the pittance most wage-earners receive has been the deadliest enemy of thrift. What was the use of scraping together the few pence which were all that could be saved when they could not fail to be ridiculously inadequate in the end, and if it would be all the same in the end? Some of those who insist most on the need for compulsory contributions can have no idea of how many there are who never have enough for the present with its necessities, and whose rainy-day is never far off.

Take, for example, these figures, in addition to those already given. A sanitary inspector in the East of London reports the following wages as paid in that district: For making boys' knickers 10d. a dozen is paid; for ladies' blouses 6d. a dozen; and for shirts which sell in the West End at 3s. 11d. each, 1s. 7d. a dozen. There is not much margin there for contributions to any fund! He tells of a woman who contracted to make four hundred pairs of trousers at 8½d. a pair and then sub-let the work at 5½d. The General Assembly of the United Free Church of Scotland, at one of its recent meetings, was informed by one of its committees that there are large numbers throughout the country who are unable to earn an adequate subsistence, although they are skilful workers and work twelve and even sixteen hours a day. A

report on the earnings of four hundred and three women workers in Glasgow in sixteen different departments of employment showed their average earnings for six and a half hours a day to be 3·08d. an hour, or 1s. 7½d. a day. Sweated boot and shoe work yields an average of from 5s. to 9s. a week, or from ¾d. to 1¾d. an hour; while in the "hook-and-eye carding" the average weekly earnings of fifty-six women were 3s. 3½d., although some of them worked very long hours. How ridiculous to speak of such workers contributing to a pension fund! The truth is that few of them live to be qualified for an Old Age Pension.*

These may be extreme instances; it is to be earnestly hoped they are. Certainly they are not normal, or we would be near the abyss. But it is known to all who come into actual contact with suffering, sentient, sinning men and women, and not merely with theories and statistics, that Old Age Pensions were not begun a day too soon and that only a beginning has been made. It is very dreadful to think of the mournful procession in the days which are gone, for whom the only prospect in old age, even in our land of enormous accumulations of wealth, was the poorhouse. "To slave while there is strength—in age the poorhouse, a parish shell at last, and the little bell tolled hastily for a pauper's funeral."

The objections which have been urged against such a provision for the old age of the very poorest of our industrial veterans have been singularly futile, and some of them singularly indecent. Politicians

* It may be questioned whether contributory payments to Old Age Pensions are not just taxes, after all, disguised like the ancient "benevolences."

—it would be unfair to call them statesmen—themselves enjoying sinecures and pensions, or lying in wait for them, have asserted that any such provision would sap the independence of our workmen and make the pauper spirit universal. One of our Proconsuls, just after the nation had voted him £50,000 for his services abroad, and while in receipt of a pension which would have provided old age pensions on the ordinary scale for a small town, actually argued in that fashion. The same thing was done, too, by one who receives a political pension of £1,200 a year, which was granted only after he had made a statutory declaration that he required help to enable him to maintain his station in life!

It is remarkable how ready some men are to risk the corruption of their own manly spirit of independence, and how much they admire public righteousness in others. I have never heard that our army officers are degraded by the prospect of a pension when they retire; nor have I ever heard that the ministers of the Church to which I belong are corrupted either before or after they retire by the operations of the Aged and Infirm Ministers' Fund. I have heard that Fund itself objected to on the ground that working men have as much right to retiring allowances as ministers, with which I heartily agree. But I would level up and not down.

It has also been argued that Old Age Pensions will encourage improvidence and prevent thrift. But this objection has no more foundation than the other. The worst improvidence is found among those who know well that no matter how provident they are they cannot escape the poorhouse in

the end of the day. The worst waste is among those who know that whether they waste or not, they will be on the rocks at last; and the references which are so common to thrift as an old-fashioned virtue which used to prevail everywhere have but little support in the actual annals of the poor. It is one of the virtues which seem to have been always old-fashioned, like the obedience of children and devotion on the part of domestic servants.

Time will tell, but those who know the poor best believe that the provision now made will be the very incentive to thrift which was most required, and that the poorest will now see the advantage of having something, no matter how little, to supplement the State provision, which will always be tiny at the best. It is like having something already in the Savings Bank, and it is well known that that makes powerfully for thrift. As for generating the pauper spirit, the old methods did that, with a maximum of waste and a minimum of benefit to any but officials.

The Majority and Minority alike of the Poor Law Commission agree that the present system is bad and must be ended, and it is intolerable to find that under these laws it costs 4s. 6d. to give 5s. to the poor. Old Age Pensions rightly administered will exorcise the pauper spirit—that spirit which happily, however, never touches many whose names are on the poor rolls. The old age pensioner of the State will no more be degraded by what he gets than the veteran soldier or infirm minister, and as the system becomes established it will put our entire Poor Law system on a new basis and change the whole outlook of the poor in the most helpful fashion. There will no longer be

a great dead wall ahead, a great bank of black fog, but room for hope and some incentive to growth. For, as those who live among the poor know, one of the gloomiest features in the outlook, not merely of the poverty-stricken, but of the ordinary working man, is the uncertainty which envelopes him.

Modern conditions, as we have seen, have greatly intensified this. They have, indeed, made it an appalling menace. There is nothing more tragic than the way in which workers fall out of the ranks and are trodden underfoot by the army which comes surging on, and is callous, because hungry. Men in the mass may be susceptible to lofty and disinterested emotion and appeal, as the same men are not when taken in detail; but when they come on in crowds in search of work they are often strangely indifferent to those who are down.

Even where there is some fixity of tenure so long as there is health, the workman has the gloomiest apprehensions, almost certainties, as to what his lot will be when he is no longer young. Many tradesmen cannot get regular employment now after they are fifty, although as a matter of fact many of them are then at their best. If the full wage must be paid, employers prefer to pay it to those they think likeliest to earn it; and while many employers would hesitate to discharge a man because his hair is turning grey, if such a worker happens to be out of work he finds it difficult to get regular employment again.

So, too, if compensation must be paid when accidents happen, employers prefer workmen whom they think the least likely to meet with accidents; and thus men who require to use glasses, and

whose strength is not what it once was, are turned adrift. And the situation thus created is very pathetic as well as serious. Even very considerable savings cannot tide men over for twenty years or more, and the number of those who can be maintained by the superannuation or other benefit funds of the Trade Unions, or by charitable and benevolent societies which have funds for such purposes, must always be comparatively small.

So, too, the number of those who can get lighter jobs by which to maintain themselves is very limited, and by and by the same influences which led to them losing their work at their trades make them lose their lighter jobs too. As for their families, if they have them, even if they are grown up and able to help, they have usually enough to do with themselves; and few experiences can be more humiliating for any man than to require to extort, through the Poor Law inspector, a shilling a week from this son, and another shilling from that son-in-law, when he is no longer fit for work. Only working folk know what a fruitful source of domestic discord and unhappiness this has been. Of course, where there are no savings and no family, there is nothing but the Church and an Old Age Pension between the stricken or cast-off and the pauper's fare and the pauper's grave.

In May, 1908, Sir John Brunner, the eminent chemical manufacturer, made an interesting contribution to this question of casting aside those who are no longer young in a letter to the *Times* newspaper. He told that in connection with his works every accident, however trifling, had to be reported to the works' surgery, and tables have been prepared showing the relation between the

number of accidents and the age of the injured. The results for fifteen years show "that the proportion of accidents becomes less and less, with remarkable regularity, as the men advance in years, and therefore that no employer is justified in his own interest in refusing to take elderly men into his service, or in dismissing them, in the belief that they are more liable to accident than their younger brethren."* It is to be hoped that such views will be adopted generally and put into practice, for the sense of uncertainty is terribly real, and the dread of old age a crushing horror for very many.

Two instances will illustrate this and show how it acts. The one grew out of an advertisement for a church officer for a rich congregation which offered a salary of £70 a year. Hundreds of applications poured in, many of them coming from men who were earning far more than the salary offered, and were in what seemed at first sight more desirable situations. But they were attracted by the element of security and continuity which such a situation brings, as compared with the certainty of what bad trade or accident might

* The figures are worth preserving:—

Years of age.	19–25	26–30	31–35	36–40	41–45	46–50	51–55	56–60 &over	
Number of men at work ..	633	533	616	656	531	382	251	246	= 3,848
Percentage of accidents per annum ..	8·5	6·8	4·2	3·6	2·8	3·7	2·4	2·4	

Similarly Sir George Livesay, in a record of accidents at the Metropolitan Gas Works between 1897 and 1905, found that the most hazardous age was between twenty and thirty years of age; the percentage of accidents among men between fifty and sixty was only two-thirds as great.

bring, and old age is sure to bring, in other occupations. The great attraction of the beadleship was that it was practically for life.

The other case was in connection with the administration of a great estate I used to know well. The workmen had what seemed, and really was, a ridiculously low wage; hardly a living wage, indeed. Yet they were reasonably comfortable and wonderfully content, because in addition to their pay, and certain perquisites which often mitigate the hardship of country service, they knew that when they were no longer fit for work, and they were not readily pronounced unfit, the half of their wages would be continued as a pension for life. The poorhouse never came into their horizon, and although they were always poor, far too poor, they were a remarkably fine set of men and got on remarkably well. Nor did their pensions mean as much for their landlord-employer as might at first sight appear. He owned nearly the whole parish, and not only were the wages lower than they would have been but for the pensions, the poor-rate was infinitesimal. Much that was paid in retiring allowances was saved in rates, while the moral and social results were immensely different.

And so it will probably be everywhere when Old Age Pensions are an integral and established part of our social scheme. There will be vast economies, in addition to all the moral gains, as thrift is encouraged, the mists of uncertainty roll away, and the toiling multitudes are saved from the presence and prospect of degradation.

No one denies, of course, that there are difficulties in the way, but short of Socialism there can be no solution of the labour problem which does not

face the difficulties on Christian lines, and if some call this solution Socialistic we need not quarrel over words. What has to be insisted on is that the problem must be solved, and solved soon; that the poorest must get the opportunity to develop his manhood and live a clean and healthy moral life as becomes one for whom Christ died, one who was made at first in the image of God.

It would lead us into too many side-issues, which are only for experts, to discuss the relations between the Poor Law system, which now stands condemned, and the labour problem. There have been times when the relation was very close and important. At the end of the eighteenth century, for example, outdoor relief was so abused that the labourer in England had ceased to be regarded as permanently self-supporting. The result was that such relief offered a better living than work, and the number of workers decreased. By 1834 the circle of pauperism embraced nearly the whole labouring population in many parishes.

One of these reported that "men with families were in the habit of being relieved who were known to earn from 15s. to 18s. a week, and unless it was shown that the earnings of the family amounted to 25s. weekly allowances were not refused." This was a parish in which the nail industry was carried on in the homes of the workers, and it is significant that the people employed in this trade never seem to have recovered from this degradation, and are still among the worst-paid and most miserable workers in the country.

The English Workhouse was invented in 1834 to save the nation from the dire results of this evil

system, and after that relief to able-bodied persons was refused except on the sacrifice of their liberty, and the form of relief was made as unattractive as possible.

Nor has this intimate association between the Poor Law problem and the labour problem come to an end. The Report of the recent Poor Law Commission bears out that, contrary to expectation, the evidence laid before them shows clearly that casual labour is maintaining a stream of paupers much greater and more constant than either low wages, bad housing, or even drunkenness, so long as these are combined with reasonable regularity of employment.

The gigantic evils which still exist must be faced along many lines, but if progress is to be made they must all be Christian lines. Whatever help is given to the fallen and wounded must have regard to the moral uplift and training of those who are helped. It may be true that in some way or other we shall always have the poor with us, although Christ's words do not imply that we need never hope to drive poverty from the land; but so long as it exists our treatment of it ought to be dissociated from any degrading elements which would perpetuate or develop the pauper spirit.

Nor is it too much to expect that by means of a wise system of Old Age Pensions, combined with the spread of education and temperance in the spirit of Christ, the problem of poverty will become quite manageable and cease to have any important bearing on the problems of labour. Nothing less than the abolition of poverty as we have it in the misery and starvation which still disgrace our land can be the Christian social ideal.

There are only too many who seem to think they have some sort of vested interest in poverty and the poor. They spend their time in seeking to regulate poverty, rather than in seeking to abolish it. They hold their conferences about the different aspects of the dismal theme, and all too seldom seem to be inspired by any passionate yearning or purpose to lift the submerged wholly out of the depths, and to chase the dark shadows away for ever.

There ought to be some provision for the application of compulsory arbitration to labour disputes. Considerable progress has already been made with voluntary State-arranged arbitration; and just as the Post Office, with its identical charges for any distance, has been a striking lesson in what the State can do well by way of collectivism, the work of the great voluntary Conciliation Boards in preventing or arranging labour disputes has shown what imperial and impartial tribunals with ample powers might do to prevent striking on the one hand and locking-out on the other. Such Boards, truly representative and truly authoritative, could end the internecine strife with which we are so painfully familiar; that strife in which victory is the next worst thing to defeat, and in which the nation suffers whatever side may win.

The time cannot be far distant when men will be amazed that such a barbarous state of affairs was allowed to continue so long. Strikes and lock-outs are not only brutal and often useless, they are injurious to the best interests of the entire community. It may be that even the modern State cannot altogether deprive men of the power to cease work after due notice; but it is

clear that no body of men, whether workmen or employers, have the right to ruin a district, to drive trade out of its wonted channels, or to inflict endless injuries on non-combatants. Still less can they have the right to do such things out of sheer wantonness or by way of revenge.

The history of strikes in this country is as suggestive as it is sad. The fiercest of them have been colossal failures which, like the Crimean war, could have been avoided, and therefore ought never to have been. No well-governed State can continue to allow such wanton waste of character or capital. It is not surprising therefore that everything is pointing in the direction of some sort of compulsory arbitration. As far back as 1849 a beginning was made in the silk trade, and since 1870 such Boards have arranged sliding-scales of wages in the coal, iron, and steel trades, and done valuable service. In the coal trade, ever since the great dispute of 1893, Boards composed of equal numbers of employers and employees, and with a chairman or umpire nominated by the Speaker of the House of Commons, have fixed the rate of wages.

In 1896 another step was taken by the interposition of Parliament in the sphere of arbitration. Although there was no element of compulsion in the Conciliation Act of that year, it empowered the Board of Trade to take certain steps to promote the settlement of labour disputes. The officials of that Board may hold inquiries and endeavour to arrange meetings between the parties at variance; and on the application of either party may appoint an arbiter. During the five years subsequent to the passing of the Act, 113 cases were dealt with

by the authorities, and a settlement was effected in 70 of these, while in ten others the parties themselves effected a settlement while negotiations were in progress. Of the 70 settlements, 32 resulted from conciliation and 38 from arbitration.

In recent years Mr. Lloyd George, who became President of the Board of Trade in 1906, has been much in evidence in connection with conciliation, especially in connection with troubles among railway servants and in the cotton trade. His experience showed that in many cases all that is really required is to bring the parties together under a neutral chairman; and one of the advantages of Trade Unionism is that the workers can be dealt with through representatives in whom they have confidence and who can undertake obligations on their behalf. This is now admitted by employers and others who formerly opposed Unionism; although it must be added that in some recent troubles the men have shown a tendency to repudiate their representatives which would be fatal were it persisted in. The action, however, in this connection of men like Mr. Barnes and Mr. Bell has shown how truly worthy of trust labour leaders may be, and here, as elsewhere, there can be little doubt that the principle of solidarity will win the day.

Mr. Winston Churchill, who succeeded Mr. Lloyd George as President of the Board of Trade, carried voluntary conciliation still further in the direction of wise compulsion. He drew up three panels from which Courts of Arbitration may be formed, on application to the Board of Trade, when a question arises in any trade. These panels consist respectively of those who can act as

chairmen, as representatives of employers, and as representatives of employees. The Court usually consists of one member from each panel, and those who agree to apply for such a Court bind themselves to abide by its decisions.

A newspaper paragraph—of date, December 12, 1909—shows how the Act works: "We are officially informed by the Board of Trade that they have received an application from the Glasgow Master Plasterers' Association and the Glasgow Branch of the Scottish National Operative Plasterers' Federal Union for the appointment of a Court of Arbitration to decide questions which have arisen between the parties with regard to the rate of wages and the limitation of the number of apprentices. The Board of Trade have accordingly appointed a Court, consisting of his Honour Judge O'Connor, chairman; Mr. James Platt, arbitrator, from the employers' panel; and Mr. J. D. Prior, arbitrator, from the labour panel."

If this scheme works as well as it ought, it must open up the way to a still larger element of compulsion, although of course, the step from voluntary to compulsory arbitration is a big one, and there are serious obstacles in the way. Employers naturally object to submit questions to outsiders which involve the management of their business. On the other hand, employees naturally object to leave the question of their wages to an arbiter unless the question of a living-wage has been settled and some sort of minimum guaranteed. Without that they may find themselves worse off than they were; and in fairness it must be acknowledged that the umpire usually belongs to the class which sympathises with the employer rather than

the employee. This is all the truer now that limited liability companies are so common, and there are few even among the most exclusive, even among the judges, who are not interested in trade.

The denunciation of the Act providing for an eight-hours day for miners, by Chambers of Commerce and similar bodies, is an example of how such a tendency might show itself; for that has been based on the belief that the legislation in question would raise the price of coal, and on the pre-supposition that that is the main consideration involved.

These and other difficulties, however, have been largely overcome by our own colonists in New Zealand and New South Wales, and what they have done with the best results can surely be done at home. New Zealand has earned the proud title of "The land without a strike," and even recent troubles in New South Wales must not be taken as proving that compulsion has been a failure there, disconcerting though it has been to find the workers striking in defiance of the law while their case was still before the court. But it takes time to overcome inveterate passions and bring everybody into line; and the important point is that even there the law triumphed; that the recalcitrant leaders were sent to prison; and that the men went back to work to await the finding of the arbiters.

It was always felt that the real test would come when the finding in any particular case was decisively against the men; and in an early Australian case it was not surprising to find two hundred men out of five thousand involved refusing to accept an award reducing their

wages. But what was overlooked by adverse critics at home was that in this crucial case the Trade Union officials did their best to induce everybody to accept the finding; and the significant thing was, not that a minority refused to submit, but that the vast majority of the workmen were loyal to a decision so distasteful. The manager of one of the largest mines involved says: "To my mind the Arbitration Act has twice saved the situation. That is worth considering when one reflects how much Newcastle has suffered from strikes in the country; more, perhaps, than any other town. Twice in Newcastle it has saved us from a ruinous strike. Each side in turn has accepted the decision of the Court."

It may be expected, therefore, that the difficulties inevitable to a change so vast will be overcome as they emerge, and that the Colonies will continue to show the way. As for the fear that legislation of this sort will prevent capital from flowing into the Colonies, it is enough to say that they continue to prosper; that there have been times when capital flowed in too easily; and that their prosperity will be all the greater and more assured if it comes gradually and rests on a foundation of mutual justice and good-will.

It is, of course, always more difficult to introduce such changes into an old country with hoary institutions and inveterate prejudices; but the difficulties in the way of remaining as we are will probably prove greater than those in the way of advance, and the loss of character, as well as of wages and capital, which is caused by the present barbarous and suicidal way of dealing with disputes, cannot be tolerated much longer.

The next step to compulsion might be found in something like the Industrial Disputes Investigation Act which has been in operation in Canada since 1907, and has won the unanimous approval of the Press there. Thirty days' notice of any change of hours or wages has to be given to the other side, and if they cannot agree the Act comes into operation. The Government, however, assumes no responsibility, and the penalty clauses are applied by the ordinary Courts of Justice. The very development of the inter-organisation of the different trades which finds scope in attempts to arrange a national strike, and the development of corresponding organisations among employers with the purpose of replying to a strike anywhere by a lock-out everywhere, may be taken to show how easily we might pass to a higher unity embracing both sides.

The best interests of the employers are after all the same as those of their worthiest employees, and our most enterprising merchants and contractors could not but welcome an equitable system which would deliver them from the uncertainty which is brought into all their operations by the possibility of labour disputes. There are contracts in which no strike-clause can be put, and even where there is such a clause it is a source of weakness and embarrassment.

In these days, when trade is becoming international after a new sort, and the strife of the nations is so keen, a system so destructive as that in vogue must surely soon be brought to an end. It is a barbarous anachronism, a relic of the time when every man's hand was against his neighbour; and it is evident that all the influence of the

Christian Church should be exerted in favour of any honourable means of ending the class hatreds, the blighting of homes, and the general unsettlement which result from the present system.

What is wanted most of all in the industrial order is justice; and every Christian should have a passion for righteousness and truth. Blessed are the peacemakers; and there is a large field here for all who would bring in the kingdom of the Prince of Peace. No agitation is less selfish or less sectional than this for the termination of strikes and lock-outs. It is for the good of the entire community, for the peace and prosperity of all the people, and it will be passing strange if a way out cannot be found. It is a great blunder to imagine that the demand for compulsory arbitration is in the interest of Labour or Trade Unionism as such. It is not even certain that organised labour would favour it as much as organised employers. The demand is in the interest of the nation, which should no more be exposed to the tyranny of Trade Unions, which like all other institutions are fallible, than to the coercion of federated employers.

To think for one moment of the labour problem as synonymous with the Trade-Union problem is a vast mistake. It is far bigger and more difficult than that, since there are multitudes of workers who are not connected with any organisation, as well as multitudes more whose employment is so precarious that their primary problem is how to get enough to eat. Neither Church nor State should face this question from the standpoint of any one class, except in so far as the Church, in harmony with the practice and precept of her Lord, should have special regard to those who are

least able to help themselves. Before the altar, as in the law courts, there should be no difference between employer and employed.

The true reciprocity which is our ideal can be attained only when both Church and State are loyal to it and honour all men. The Church is not to be debarred from letting her light shine all round, and from declaring the whole counsel of God, because of the obscurantism which declares that she should confine herself to what is purely spiritual; any more than the State is to be deterred from doing her duty to the wounded and weak because of the individualism which declares that this involves the secular reproduction of the Inquisition.

Although Trade Unionism is an important factor in the labour problem, it is not necessary to discuss it here. It is equally foolish to denounce the Old Unionism, or to ban the New; and it is sheer affectation to ignore either.* While, however, we can rejoice in the powerful protest which Trade Unionism has made against the evils of individualism, and in the spirit of self-sacrifice and self-abnegation which it has so often manifested, we are also free to admit that it has often been one-sided and short-sighted. Few, if any, of the great strikes which it has organised have been really successful, while some of the restrictions which it has imposed

* Most employers now acknowledge that it is an advantage to have Unions to negotiate with; and the great efforts of these Unions to improve the condition of their members have not been prompted by selfishness so much as by yearnings for opportunities to develop their lives, and many sacrifices have been made by them for this end.

have not only added to the difficulties of the employers unnecessarily, but have reacted against the labourers themselves. It is noble for the better workman to put himself on the same plane as his weaker or less-skilful comrade at the bench, and the moral value of this aspect of Unionism has not been sufficiently recognised; but even this may lead to practices which are hurtful, alike to the superior and the inferior workman.

There ought to be some worthy incentive to every one to do his best if labour is to be moralised and spiritualised. Herbert Spencer has pointed out that the result of the restrictions common now is that "the more energetic and skilful workmen are not allowed to profit to the full extent of their capacity;" while Mr. Mill said: "It is known that the bad workmen who form the majority of the operatives in many branches of industry are decidedly of opinion that the bad workmen ought to receive the same wages as the good, and that no one should be allowed, through piece-work or otherwise, to earn by superior skill or industry more than others can earn without it."

But it is hardly correct to argue as if the Unions insist that all workmen, inefficient or professedly efficient, shall be paid at the same rate. What they really seek to do is to fix a minimum wage below which the craftsman should not go, because it means starvation. They do not prevent their members from getting as much as they can; but they seek to protect them from being compelled to take as little as the employer chooses to give them. Nor is it difficult to understand why the tone of such criticism as that of Spencer and Mill

is keenly resented. It involves a theory which would end in setting man against man in the very worst fashion, and the unions are right in opposing it with all their might.

Yet on the other hand, if the system which they criticise does tend to reduce workers, good, bad, and indifferent, to the same level of mediocrity and to prevent the ablest workmen from doing their best to their own advantage and the advantage of others, it is not enough to reply that a still more grievous wrong may be inflicted on the moral self of the worker from the other side.

There are dangers both ways, and those who realise that the strength of any organisation is in proportion to the number of self-reliant and fully-developed men in it, will set themelves strenuously against everything which can reduce workmen to being machines, whether the danger comes from the side of immoral competition or from the side of eye-service, scamping, and shirking a fair day's work.

When once labour has come to its own there will probably be a greater tendency than there is now to give and take; just as it is probable that if ever we have a Labour government it will be harder on the loafer and more insistent on the need for every one learning how to work than the present ruling classes can be. Only the strong can be generous; and it is said that in the revolutionary era in Europe some sixty years ago governments were weak because they were not sure of their position. In America, on the other hand, where the democracy believes in itself, they use machine-guns if need be to scatter mobs.

And certainly there is room for both give and take in the relations of Unions and employers. The limitation of the number of apprentices, for example, for which so much can be said, has in some instances been carried so far as to injure instead of benefiting those already in the trades involved. So, too, laudable as attempts to fix the amount of work a man might do as a protest against "horsing" may have been, they have led to the "ca-canny" policy, which is a menace to morality as well as to efficiency.

In some quarters, too, as we have seen, the insistence on a minimum standard wage, so necessary in the interest of a living wage, has this enormous drawback, that in trades where great physical strength is needed, those who are no longer young and as alert as they were have to make way for those who are stronger in a heart-breaking fashion. Sir John Brunner, Sir George Livesey, and others may prove that such action is needless, but error dies hard; and under the present system many an elderly man who might have worked for years at a lower wage than the standard in consideration of failing vigour, goes to swell the number of those who depend on casual employment.

It is only fair to add, however, that the "too old at forty" cry has been shown to be somewhat of a myth, and that matters are mending in this respect. In 1886 the average age of men beginning to draw superannuation benefit from the Amalgamated Society of Engineers was 61½ years, whereas in 1906 it had risen to 63½, and in 1907 to 64¾. But engineering is a trade where skill counts for more even than strength, and it is otherwise in some other trades.

These reflections on some phases of Trade Unionism are made in no captious spirit, but with the utmost sympathy for what it has done and stands for; and with the heartiest recognition that as things are it is not only advisable but necessary that workers should combine to secure their rights. But Trade Unionism is big enough and strong enough now to be criticised;* and if only the Christian ideal were more adequately realised on both sides as well as by those who are on neither side, and it were seen more clearly that every right involves a duty, the rights of all would be more adequately secured than they are now.

Not only so, but it would become obvious that there is no need to concentrate the forces of capital and labour into separate, and even hostile, camps, as if the one army could only flourish at the expense of the other. Both alike are necessary, although there ought to be a better distribution of the rewards of the common efforts; and whenever that comes it will be seen that the interests of the two forces are identical, and that they must stand or fall together.

Everything, however, depends on the Christian ideal being realised, and that great consummation cannot be attained unless the atmosphere in which we live and move and have our being

* Probably about one-third of all the manual labourers in the nation are in the Trade Unions. The membership in the various Unions in 1907 was 2,406,746, which showed an increase of 43 per cent. in ten years. The hundred principal unions reported on by the Labour Department had an income of nearly two and a half millions in 1907. Their accumulated funds amounted at the same date to nearly six millions.

is Christianised. To bring this about is the main part of the service to which every Christian is called. It is the one form of service in which every believer can share, since everything may be said or thought or done so as to contribute to this end.

Nor is it too much to claim that there are many indications of progress. Even the discontent and unrest which prevail in many quarters are proof of this; and healing will follow the troubling of the waters. We have only to compare the tone which prevailed in commercial circles even a third of a century ago with what prevails now to see how great the change for the better has been. In the year 1871 the Chairman of a great English railway company, speaking at the annual meeting of his company, said that "the remuneration of labour, the value of which altogether depends on the one great, universal law of supply and demand, is a question in which there is little room for sentiment." A leading article in the *Times* newspaper, in the year 1885, declared that the level to which the cup of human happiness can be filled up is "determined by laws as inexorable as that of gravity."

But such statements are seldom made in public now, whatever may be thought in the dens and caves of the earth amid ignorance and obscurantism. The intervening years have shown that the problem of wages is far more complex than was then imagined by the politicians and economists, as well as by the capitalists; and that such things as the gospel and sentiment enter into it largely.

Not only has the standard of living risen steadily in these fruitful years, so that the rear-guard is where the vanguard used to be, but what is even more significant, the standard of aspiration has risen even more quickly. The outlook has so changed that almost all thoughtful and humane men now recognise gratefully and gladly that the doctrines so recently held in honour are wholly inadequate, where they are not demonstrably misleading and untrue. Even those who cannot yet tell where they are wrong, feel that they are wrong, and resent them.

All through the relations of employers and employed there is room and need for Christian sentiment. The absence of such sentiment is not only a danger and loss at every point, it tells directly on the quality and quantity of the work done. A French monarch once refused a request on the ground that it was only a sentiment. "Yes, my liege," replied the petitioner, "but you are only a sentiment."

All our hopes for the future depend on labour being ennobled by ideal conceptions, noble sentiments, noble inspiration, through the power of Christian truth; and incessant warfare ought to be waged against the materialism and paganism which seek to reduce the relationships of the labour market to the action and inter-action of inexorable laws. The laws which govern the work done by sentient men and women, with passions and moral self-respect, with yearnings capable of fathoming hell or rising high as heaven, cannot be inexorable in the sense alleged.

The relations of employers and employed, both

alike made for God and unable to realise their true being apart from Him, cannot be altogether kept out of the realm of sentiment; and the tendency to reason from laws of natural selection among the lower animals to the lives of men and women for whom Christ died is wholly irrational.

The extent to which this is now recognised is the measure of the change which has taken place, and is so full of promise. Never was the waste of human lives and the failure of so many to attain blessedness felt to be so intolerable as it is now; and never was there such determination that life's joys must not be altogether postponed to the hereafter. There must be some brightness here and now for all who love mercy and do justly; and more than ever, in spite of prevalent indifference, apparent and real, Christian truth is leavening the thought and aspirations of our generation in a new way; and many are now looking out through Christ's eyes on the great areas which are still shrouded in gloom, and on the masses who still toil with neither joy nor hope.

It is not true that men and women find their own level if left to themselves, as water does; nor are they ever left to themselves, as if they were fortuitous atoms and not parts of a great organism. To reason from what gravity does in the case of water, to the ceaseless, pervasive influence of immortal souls on each other, is to outrage analogy and discredit logic. Even water does not always find its own level; and so long as man is a social and spiritual being, that is so long as he is man, there will be obstacles

without number to prevent him from being altogether subject to blind and inexorable laws. He may have little choice as to the horses which are harnessed to the car of his life, but he must drive them somehow, and that means much.

Not only so, but there is abundant scope for the operation of Christ's laws, which protest against man's inhumanity to man; which insist on the infinite value of the soul; and which demand that the weak and even the wayward shall no longer be driven ruthlessly to the wall or trampled contemptuously under foot. It is not Christian, but pagan, for any to look on while others for whom Christ died are torn among the jagged wheels; and excuse themselves by the plea that such things are determined by blind laws, and that there is no room for sentiment in the relations of employer and employed.

Nor is it one whit more Christian to find comfort in the reflection that social discontent and a degraded class are nothing new. What does it matter how long evil conditions have lasted if they are evil and can be dealt with hopefully now? The problem of the distressed labourer is indeed dreadfully ancient; but it has assumed many new aspects as the ages passed, and its present aspect is the most hopeful of any through which it has yet passed.

The way in which it now centres round the two opposing forces of Capital and Labour; the concentration of enormous power in the hands of vast financial combinations; the advent of the working man to political power; the enormous

development of machinery; and the herding of great masses of labourers into huge factories and workshops and densely-crowded centres of population, are all comparatively new features in the situation, and render it critical and urgent after a new fashion. For weal or woe it must now be solved somehow, and ancient as the problem is there are elements in it which are full of hope if it be faced under the leadership of Christ, just as there are also elements which are full of danger and even probabilities of disaster if the solution is sought for under any other auspices.

It is one of many proofs that even the Church is sharing in the materialistic spirit of our age that so many who bear the name of Christ find it possible to ignore His specific instructions. They talk of His love for the perishing, and about nothing being fruitful but sacrifice, and yet look with unconcern on the masses of the over-crowded, underpaid, and unemployed over whom He yearns, as if such a state of affairs were an irreversible ordinance of God. As for the faith some have that doles, either of money or work, will cure our social ills, it is altogether futile, even as an outlet for their goodness of heart which persists in spite of materialistic economics. Charity is divine, and there will always be room for it even in an ideal State. Charity Organisation Societies, too, in spite of all the dislike for them which finds expression in so many ways, have helped many and will be needed so long as there are loafers, soakers, and spongers. But charity can only deal with exceptional cases, and charity organisation however Christian, can solve no problems, but can only meet special emergencies. What must be

secured is organised work; work sufficiently remunerative and in harmony with the labourer's destiny as an immortal soul; and Christian hearts must be turned in that direction instead of being content to help the waifs and strays.

It is true that some raise the cry about the right to work who have no desire to work, and have never worked, but if that demand be taken along with the correlative duty to work it cannot be condemned and can hardly be ignored. Half a century ago, when charity was often very mawkish and unpractical, the plea was tendered that something might be done for those who had never been in prison as well as for those who had been there; that efforts might be made to prevent men from drifting into crime as well as to help them after they had fallen. So there is room now for the kindred plea that our primary concern, both in Church and State, should be with the worker and not the loafer; that we should strenuously seek the salvation of the labouring classes; and the salvation of the land through their work.

We must begin with the lads and put an end to the manufacture of loafers, one of the most flourishing of our industries, and train everybody to work. This has been made painfully evident in the report of the Poor Law Commissioners and in connection with recent attempts to deal with distress due to unemployment. Mr. John Burns, as President of the Local Government Board, has said that the saddest and most difficult of all the problems raised has been that of the comparatively young men who have never really worked and have never so learned to work as to be able to do anything useful. "The grave condition of boy-

labour to-day," say the Commissioners, "calls for immediate action," and it is to be hoped that the Church as well as the State will hear the bitter cry of those who are being so trained that they cannot but end in being thrown on the "scrap heap of casual labour." *

Christianity alone can deal finally and effectively with the labour problem and the labourer, because it alone can touch the whole round circle of human life. Infinitely important as character is compared with environment, environment must be attended to as well as character; and the sunless gulfs, the frozen wastes must everywhere be illumined and gladdened by the sunshine of the Saviour Christ. The stones must be taken away from the grave's mouth that they who are therein may hear the voice of the Son of Man. Hope must be restored and despair chased away that the broken and crushed may rise to newness of life.

Man cannot live by bread alone, and multitudes are weary of the attempt to do so with its inevitable disillusionment and failure. There is always something of the infinite in man, no matter how far he may have drifted from God, and when he fails in his quest the blackest shadow which falls on his wasted life is that of a perverted ideal. He had been seeking more than he knew, and there is deep disgust in his heart because he has never found God, who made him for Himself, and apart from whom he can neither do his true work nor find his rightful place.

But there must be an appropriate physical basis

* The heart, if not the conscience, of the nation has been touched by the revelations as to what are called "blind-alley" occupations, so disastrous to all concerned.

for the spiritual life since man is body and soul; and no more a soul with a body attached, than a body which has a soul. However we may argue as to what is cause and what effect in connection with abounding social evils, nothing is more certain than that physical destitution crushes out, steadily and surely, every yearning after God. To be for ever defeated in the battle to keep the wolf from the door, or even from the table where the children's bread is lying, blocks the way to the unseen, and even destroys the desire for the unseen.

Nothing short of a revolution can provide a solution on an adequate scale, and nothing but applied Christianity can bring about a revolution which will be a blessing and not a calamity. The revolution is coming in any case; what Christians can secure is that it will come peacefully and hopefully under the flag of Christ, and not under any alien master.

Most of those who are studying history and political economy with open eyes and responsive hearts see now that apart from the gospel, with its healing influences and its Divine power, dire catastrophe cannot be averted; and that quite apart from any prejudice in favour of dogmatic Christianity. Some see it who are not themselves believers. As has already been shown, men like the late Professor Thorold Rogers and the late Mr. Lecky were profoundly convinced that it is only through such forces as the gospel alone can bring to bear on the problem that it can ultimately be solved in any proper way.

Whatever historical foundation there may be for Mr. Keir Hardie's view that from the beginning

of the thirteenth till the middle of the fifteenth century things were better than they are now, with rude abundance for all, and neither paupers nor millionaries, the fact remains that during the last twenty-five years there has been abundance of the necessaries of life, even for the very poor, after a new fashion. Wages have gone up, while prices have fallen, and the consumption of such articles as ham and tea and tobacco has increased steadily. There are more holidays, too, and shorter hours; while opportunities for recreation and amusement are far more numerous. The standard of living has gone up everywhere, and prevalent discontent is partly divine, inasmuch as it tells of new yearnings and needs which have come with growth.

Yet it is becoming increasingly evident that satisfactory as this movement of amelioration is, it is not along these lines that the moral and social millennium will come. It is one of the most striking proofs that man was made for God and has something of the infinite in him, that not only does material good alone not satisfy his deeper yearnings, it sometimes only accentuates how insatiable these are. The need for something more than mere material progress, something permanent and enduring on the lines of spiritual achievement, is as great as ever.

If the work of consecrating the greater abundance and the greater leisure which are now coming to so many, so that they will be a blessing and not a hindrance, is ever to be done, it must be done by Christianity. Nor does the gospel require to be turned into a system of political economy that it may do this. Rightly

understood it involves a political philosophy just as it involves a theory of the universe, but from first to last it must be a religion if it is to accomplish anything.

In his "Industrial Day-Dreams," although he takes up a very advanced position regarding social reform on Christian lines, Mr. Keeble contends that "the Church should confine herself to fostering the spiritual life of men, instructing and quickening the conscience, declaring social duties, and pointing out social perils and evils."

But this apparent limitation of the functions of the Church in reality means a vast extension of her sphere of influence. Never yet has she risen to these heights, and if only she rose to them she would do much to commend her Lord, not only to workers and reformers, but to sinners of mankind. She cannot compete with experts in economics, but she must be the supreme moral and spiritual authority among men if she is to do the work to which she is called, and her voice must be heard wherever men congregate. She must be above party politics, but she must be foremost in every movement for social reform. It is not her business to say whether or not Old Age Pensions should be contributory, but it is her business to insist that no taint of pauperism shall be put on her honest poor. There is much in connection with the right to work which she will gladly leave to the experts, but as the great expert in morals she must be able to lift that question to the moral plane by insisting that all who are willing and able to work shall be able to live by their work.

Nor will she be prevented by the cheap sneer

of the scorner from insisting on the worth of such commonplace remedies for social evils as letting the gospel tell all round on the home life, and refusing to join in the conspiracy of silence regarding the terrible fruits of the prevalent indulgence in strong drink. What is needed most is not knowledge, but power, and the gospel alone is the power of God unto salvation.

But the whole gospel must be proclaimed and lived if it is to have all its power. The whole counsel of God must be set forth by its exponents, and by Divine help its great counsels of perfection must be embodied in deeds by those who profess it, so that the entire life of the community may be permeated by its spirit. It is the engrafted word which is able to save society as well as the soul, but it can only regenerate the social order if men obey its commands.

It is not too much to say that we have come to a great crisis in the history of our land, if not also in the history of mankind. We are entering on a new era, and it has now to be decided whether it is to be a Christian or a pagan era. Once more Christianity is on its trial. If it can no longer regenerate society as it did in the first century, those who assert that it is not the final religion, but only a stage in the development of the race, will have much to say for their contention. Unless the gospel can deal with the new situation and Christianise the new era it will be difficult to show that it is the gospel we need.

Nor is it enough to say, as some say with manifest piety and faith, that everything would soon be put right in Church and State if only

we had a revival like that which gave us the Reformation and re-made Europe in the sixteenth-century; or that other which flooded everything with new life more than a century ago. That is true, but revival of that sort—and God never repeats himself—cannot be expected until those who are already under the influence of Christ are walking in the light they have.

We can hardly even say that such a revival is desirable if it would merely effect an improvement on the present state of affairs instead of putting an end to what is well-nigh intolerable; a Church which is little more than the world under another name; club-churches at one end of the city, and dreary mission-halls in mean streets at the other; the rich truckled to and the poor patronised if they fall dutifully into line; and a handful rescued here and there out of the seething mass of misery, discontent, and unbelief.

The truth is that unless we use the term in its vaguest sense, no nation, not even our own, has ever been Christianised yet, and the revival for which every Christian patriot should work and pray is that all the nations should become Christian in the sense of actually doing the will of God and following in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus Christ. Were that vision realised the Sermon on the Mount would be applied everywhere, as surely it was meant to be; the Spirit of the Lord would be at work in every sphere, as He yearns to work; the State would no longer be looked on by any as merely the world under another name; good people would no longer divide their lives into sacred and secular, or history, which is the living garment of God, into sacred and profane;

and not the labour problem only, but many another besides, would be solved at last.

And such a revival—a revival which would be a reformation, a revolution, and a renaissance in one—is imperative if God's kingdom is to come on the earth, or if His will is to be done here as it is in heaven; and assuredly judgment must begin at the house of God. What a privilege it would be to have some share in bringing in this better time. Men who have lived through some great conflict which secured liberty for the nation, which lowered the franchise, cheapened the people's bread, provided education for the children, or made it easier for the weak ones to be pure and sober, and more difficult for any to do wrong, are justly proud of it.

With how much more cause might those be proud who have any share in putting the keystone in the arch of freedom which the labourer has been building all through the ages, in pain of body and agony of soul; so that there would be no longer any internecine strife amongst us, but all would work in the Spirit of Christ for the common weal! The summons is urgent that all who are loyal to Christ should wait on Him and be obedient to the heavenly vision, and should walk with eagerness in the pathway on which the Divine light is falling. Vain is the help of man; vainest of all the help of the mere ecclesiastic or politician; but the Lord Jehovah is almighty, and if those who name His name and have been taught by Him are everywhere loyal to His Spirit all will yet be well.

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